WELLINGBOROUGH

Life, work and society to the early twentieth century

Stephen Swailes

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen was born in Wellingborough and has lived most his life in and around the town. Despite a spectacular failure of the 11+ he graduated in chemistry and worked in science and technology where, to help make sense of what was happening around him, he began to study management. After moving into the university sector he obtained a Ph.D. in work psychology and undertook a range of teaching, research and management roles. He has published over fifty articles, several books and chapters in books relating to organizational psychology, managing people, and management education and is now a retired professor.

His interests in local history include transcribing a wide range of old parish registers (including Wellingborough) for the County Record Office, transcribing medieval and Tudor tax returns, and indexing medieval inquests and court records relating to Northants. His articles in *Northamptonshire Past & Present* cover the lay subsidy of 1301, parish register survival and reliability, and Wellingborough's casualties in the Great War. Using information taken from local newspapers and military records he has recently published a Roll of Honour that identifies most of the 677 casualties from the Great War named on the war memorial.

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PREFACE

About fifteen hundred years ago, a group of people stopped migrating through the English Midlands and dug-in somewhere around what is now the centre of Wellingborough. They gave the town their name but beyond that we don't know much about them. A few hundred years later, Wellingborough was an important manor in the estates of Crowland Abbey and detailed manorial records tell us how the manor operated. After the medieval period the town expanded to become second to Northampton in the county. Expansion continued in the nineteenth century as manufacturing and heavy industries began to make their mark.

Against this story of steady population growth, this book traces the history of Wellingborough from its earliest origins into the recent past. In particular, it explores the social history of the town by asking some simple questions. What are the key events in Wellingborough's past, what was it like to live there, and what did it look like? In exploring these questions, the book brings together some of the main things that happened in the story of Wellingborough and some odd events as well. Some sad, some amusing. The book covers events up to the First World War and its impact on the town and its people. The modern history of the town is not covered.

Like all local histories the history of Wellingborough is unique. John Bridges covered the history of the manor and the church in his *History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire* published in the late eighteenth century. A more wide-ranging account of the town is given in John Cole's *History and Antiquities of Wellingborough* published in 1837. A short history is provided in *A History of the County of Northampton*, volume 2, which gives a detailed account of the old Grammar School and volume 4 which describes the manors and the church. The next major work is the *History of Wellingborough* by Joyce and Maurice Palmer published in 1972. More recently, the *Northamptonshire Extensive Urban Survey: Wellingborough* provides a professional report that focuses on the archaeology and development of the town.

This history of Wellingborough builds on those sources and is informed by extensive reference to original material together with new historical records and information. Local shoemaker and poet

John Askham wrote about life, family, work and nature and his poetry is occasionally used here as another way of looking back at time that has passed. Like any other local history, the book relies on the random survival of historical material across time. The tone and style of original material are retained where possible to preserve the historical context.

CHAPTER 1

EARLY SETTLEMENT

Local archaeology

Over two thousand years ago, the first settlements in the Nene valley were typically on well-drained sites close to streams or springs[1]. In the area that became Wellingborough there were several small Iron Age and Roman sites on the Finedon side of the town and there was a sizeable Roman town on the south bank of the Nene between Wellingborough and Irchester. Several Iron Age and Roman sites have been found near Wellingborough Grange (off the Hardwick Road) along with a circular mound. Iron Age sites have also been found near Nest Farm, on the Finedon Road Industrial Estate, near Gainsborough Drive, Harrowden Road, Northen Way, Hemmingwell Lodge, Ruskin Avenue, Weavers Road, the top of Lea Way, on Olympic Way, between Queensway and Kiln Way, and between Stanwell Way and Scott Road. A substantial Iron Age site now enclosed by the A45, Wilby Way and Park Farm Way was occupied for about 400 years and recent excavations found Iron Age settlement between Park Farm Way and Stanwell Way. An Iron Age site near Stanwell spring may have been used for ritual purposes[2,3].

Excavation on the Queensway estate in 1969 found the skeleton of a man dating from about 50 B.C. face down and with a broken neck[4]. Nearby, a woman's skeleton lay on its back with knees raised (very unusual) and near her were the bones of a baby. It is hard to see how these people did not meet a violent end. Evidence of habitation suggests that they died where they were living. The man appeared as if he had been thrown into a hollow made in a hut that they may have lived in. The aspect of the woman's skeleton is harder to explain but someone must have buried her in that position.

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1 Foard, G. (2013) Rural settlement, in T. Partida, D. Hall & G. Foard (Eds), *An atlas of Northamptonshire: The medieval and early-modern landscape*, pp. 81-124, Oxbow Books.

2 Jackson, D. (2010) *Dennis Jackson: a Northamptonshire archaeologist*, Oxbow Books.

3 An inventory of the historical monuments in the county of Northamptonshire, volume 2, archaeological sites in central Northamptonshire, pp166-170; www.british-history.ac.uk/northants/vol2/pp166-170.

4 Palmer, J. & Palmer, M. (1972) *A History of Wellingborough*, p. 3, Steepleprint Ltd.

Excavations near the top of Hardwick Road at Appleby Lodge found evidence of Romano-British cultivation, possibly a vineyard, and second century pottery. Further evidence of Romano-British settlement was found at the site of the new crematorium on Doddington Road together with evidence of later Saxon occupation. Saxon material was also found at the bottom of Weavers Road. A coin of Offa (757-796) was found in Queen Street about the time the Congregational Church was built. A few Viking finds were discovered when the bridge over the Ise on the Finedon Road was widened in the 1920s. Medieval finds have turned up, unsurprisingly, in more central locations such as Oxford Street, the Market Place, Tithe Barn Road and around Broad Green.

As the town expanded in the nineteenth century a lot of archaeology was destroyed. Workmen digging for ironstone in the East End in 1861 found two skeletons near the 'high road' and near to where two others had been found about five years previously. They were underneath the bottom of a ditch but the remains of a coffin pointed to relatively modern burials. In 1863, workmen again digging for stone in the East fields found a male skeleton lying on its side no more than twenty inches deep. Other finds nearby included a hand mill, hearths and vases. One or two circular pottery kilns were later found alongside Roman pottery in East End fields. An adult skeleton was found close to the surface by workmen 'cutting a new road across the Park (likely near the Poplars in Gold Street) in the direction of Herriott's Lane' Two skeletons were found close to each other in a newly dug sand pit near Potato Hall (on the Harrowden Road) in 1866. One was a child and the other an adult but no skulls were reported[5].

In 1873, ironstone diggers on the east side found a lead coffin about four feet down. A few years previously, diggers had found an ancient well which when dug out contained Roman tile and pottery. Many of these artefacts went into the office of Butlin's ironworks together with a grinding stone dug out of an adjacent field. Shortly afterwards, three skeletons were found nearby about two to four feet down. Two skeletons were found at Mather's works in Cambridge Street in 1887. They were face down and aligned north-south, close to the surface and were said to look like a woman and a youth.

5 *Northampton Mercury*, 26th January 1861; 29th January 1870; 6th October 1866.

Ironstone diggers at Finedon found at least thirteen skeletons on top of rock close to the surface and laid east-west[6]. Excavation in advance of the new Stanton Cross estate found no evidence of pre-modern archaeology except lots of flooding.

Although some valuable archaeology on the east side of the town was destroyed in the nineteenth century, sites to the north-west survived better since building there is much more recent and archaeology is now recorded before building begins. In simple terms, people have been living all over the surrounding area for over two thousand years.

The Origins of Wellingborough

Wellingborough is one of the oldest placenames in the county and earlier forms of it were probably in use by the end of the sixth century[7]. The name is made up of three parts; a personal name Waendel, 'ing' meaning the place of Waendel's people (the Waendlingas), and burh/burg which basically means a Saxon fortified or defended residence or a place where tribute (tax) was given. In essence, the name of the town means the burg of Weandel or Waendel's burgh. The current spelling came into common use in the 1600s and before that it was usually written as Wendlyngburgh or something similar. Contrary to popular belief, the town is not named after the many wells that became popular in the seventeenth century no more than Irthlingborough (also a very old placename) is named after the earth. If it had been named after wells it would not have been called Wendlyngburgh.

The most likely location for a substantial Saxon residence in the town is the once oval-shaped area around the ancient parish church (bounded by Church Street and Market Street)[8]. It is worth noting, however, that the place name Burystead survives in Burystead Place right in the centre of the town. This name existed in the early seventeenth century since George Hodges of 'Burysteed' died in

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6 *Northampton Mercury*, 17th May 1873; 24th May 1873; 24th October 1887; 25th April 1868.

7 Gover, J.E.B., Mawer, A., & Stenton, F.M. (1933). *The place-names of Northamptonshire*, p. xvii, Cambridge University Press.

8 Foard, G. and Ballinger, J. (2000). *Wellingborough Extensive Urban Survey*, p.9, NCC.

1628 and it may have existed long before. John Cole tells us that Burysteed was a 'mansion' that stood behind the Hind Hotel on the original administrative centre of the Crowland estate. Burystead means the site of a burh or a post-conquest hall[9]. Although a burh is typically associated with a fortified high-status settlement with boundary ditches of middle to late Anglo-Saxon date, fences, hedges and walls were also used[10].

Several factors, albeit entirely speculative, help to explain the location of the original Saxon settlement. The likely migration route of the Anglo-Saxons in the late fifth and early sixth centuries was along the rivers that empty into the Wash. They would have navigated up the Nene as much as they could and hauled boats across land as needed. Attractive features in the landscape may have included outcrops of limestone and ironstone, plenty of springs, and settlement on a south facing slope running down to a handy stream (Swanspool brook). The soil was well-drained and meadow land was close by. In addition to providing fish and wild fowl, the river Ise which now marks the eastern boundary of the parish and river Nene which marks the southern boundary would have acted as defensive barriers, at least for a time. The site was on higher ground away from the Nene but also on the far side of rising ground such that the settlement could not be seen by people going up and down the Nene valley. The lands to the north and west would have been more open allowing multiple escape routes if ever needed, and the landscape was perhaps generally much more wooded.

Furthermore, and given that there were many pre-Roman and Roman sites in the area covered by the modern parish, a question arises whether Waendel and his followers settled on virgin land that later became the village centre or whether something was already there? The 'already there' option seems more likely as the Saxons liked to take over existing sites on good soil rather than create new settlement and all the organization needed to go with it[11].

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9 Williams, A. (2003). A bell-house and a burh-geat: Lordly residences in England before the Norman Conquest, in R. Liddiard (Ed.) *Anglo-Norman Castles*, pp.23-40, Boydell Press.

10 Draper, S. (2008). 'The significance of Old English burh in Anglo-Saxon England', in S. Crawford & H. Hamerow (Eds), *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 15*, pp. 240-253, Oxbow Books.

11 Stafford, P. (1985). *The East Midlands in the early middle ages*. Leicester University Press.

A variation of this idea is that people living in small outlying settlements might have abandoned them and concentrated in one larger and better defended settlement that offered more sustainable livelihoods.

A few hundred years later according to ancient tradition, a nobleman called Turketyl was sent north by King Edred to restore peace[12]. On his travels he came across Crowland Abbey near Peterborough which had been ravaged by marauding Danes and reduced to a handful of very old monks. The monks relayed their tales of woe and Turketyl vowed to speak to the king about their plight. This he did and he was so touched by the monks of Crowland that he decided to join them. Disposing of his worldly goods Turketyl gave over sixty manors to the king and gave a tenth of his possessions, six manors, to the abbey in or about 948 A.D.[13]. One of these manors was in Wendlingburough. King Edgar is said to have granted privileges enabling the rebuilding of the abbey and confirmed lands at Wenlingburgh to Crowland Abbey in 966. By the start of the fourteenth century, and possibly from the outset, the main manorial complex was located on the west side of what is now Sheep Street, behind the Hind Hotel and extended down to Swanspool. The Abbey's manor at Wellingborough was unusually large in relation to others and it dominated the town until the dissolution of the monasteries in the late 1530s.

Recent excavations around the former Dun Cow public house and the former Railway Club at Broad Green found pottery from around 900 A.D. suggesting early activity there and clear evidence of domestic occupation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Nearby, eleventh to twelfth century tenements fronting onto Short Lane were found along with twelfth to thirteenth century occupation. Activity there seems to have then either declined or, if not, then evidence of later occupation has been destroyed. Evidence of medieval settlement has been found near Oxford Street, Pebble Lane, Broad Green, near the tithe barn and near Wellingborough Grange but no substantial evidence of pre-medieval activity. This is easily explained, however, since any archaeological evidence for a pre-Conquest centre could simply have been destroyed or lies buried under existing buildings.

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12 Dugdale, W. (1819). *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. 2, p.92.

13 Page, W. (Ed.) (1906). *Houses of Benedictine Monks: The Abbey of Crowland, A History of the County of Lincoln,* vol. 2, pp.105-118, London.

Life on Waendel's Burgh

Although little is known about Anglo-Saxon Wellingborough, we can get some idea of what it was like from the excavation of a near complete cemetery at Raunds dating from about 950 to 1150. Raunds was smaller with a population around forty people of whom half were adult and half were children. Men were about five feet six inches tall and women were about two inches shorter. There was a high risk of death during infancy and, for women, a high risk of death in early adulthood with childbearing being the probable cause of death. If women got to thirty-five then the risk of dying decreased compared to younger women. For men, the risk of dying increased suggesting that normal natural decay with age was the main cause of death rather than vulnerability to a risky event in the way that childbirth was a risk to women. The maximum age reached was around sixty.

Almost half of all burials were of people aged under seventeen and mortality was particularly high in infancy. At a time when life expectancy was short, children became adults quite early[14]. The average age of death was twenty and is low because it includes the deaths of a lot of infants and children which brings the average down. A girl reaching the age of seventeen on average could expect to live another sixteen years. A boy of seventeen could expect to live another twenty-two years. Degenerative joint disease was common particularly in the spine. Anaemia aggravated by inadequate diet seems to have been a problem particularly for women. Their diet seems to have been low on sugar and carbohydrates but high on protein. Injuries, presumably from accidents, were quite common particularly to the arm and leg and were more often found in men over twenty-five[15].

People were laid to rest with care. Stone markers had been placed at the foot of some graves. Stones were often placed under a person's head and sometimes over the head perhaps to prevent soil going directly onto their face. Some graves were lined with stones and some bodies had stones placed over them perhaps to alert future

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14 Stafford (1985). pp.147-151.

15 Powell, F. (1996). 'The human remains', in A. Boddington et al., *Raunds Furnells: The Anglo-Saxon church and churchyard*, pp.113-124, English Heritage.

grave diggers to the presence of a grave. Where a grave had been disturbed the bones had been reburied with care. For most people, life was one of practical survival involving hunting, farming, cooking, weaving, building and personal care.

The shire and the hundred

The boundaries of old Northamptonshire were largely established by 920 when King Edward the Elder brought much of southern England back under Anglo-Saxon rule[16]. Like many other midland counties, Northamptonshire was divided into administrative units called hundreds and each hundred notionally contained a hundred hides. The origin of the hide is lost to antiquity but most of England was hidated by the seventh century[17]. The area of a hide, notionally one hundred acres, may have had something to do with the amount of land required to support a given number of families. Hundreds were legal, military and administrative areas each with a court that dealt with crime and punishment. Every hundred had a prominent place where landowners would meet such as on high ground, at a particular tree or crossing, or in a clearing. Wellingborough was in the ancient hundred of Hamfordshoe.

Most of the old meeting places are no longer marked but one may exist near Brigstock at a place near where the boundaries of four ancient hundreds once met. A large and ancient tree called the Bow Case Tree on the edge of Rockingham Forest was used, presumably for centuries, as a boundary marker and/or a meeting place. Mentioned in a deed of 1642, when it eventually fell its location was marked by a stone that reads, 'In this plaes grew Bocase tree' and 'Here stood Bocase'. Trees do not usually get a memorial stone so the Bow Case Tree, whatever it represented, must have had a strong local significance.

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16 Page, W. (Ed.) (1930). The borough of Northampton: Introduction, In *A History of the County of Northampton*, Vol. 3.

17 Baring, F. (1902). The Pre-Domesday Hidation of Northamptonshire, *English Historical Review*, 17, 67, 470-479; Hart, C. (1970) *The Hidation of Northamptonshire*, Leicester University Dept of Local History, Occasional Papers, No. 3, p. 11.; Hart, C. (1990). Oundle: Its province and eight hundreds, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, VIII, No. 1, pp.3-23.

The Bocase Stone on Old Dry Lane, Brigstock

Hamfordshoe may have taken its name from a personal name pronounced something like Eanferth and the Saxon word 'hoe' meaning mound or hill[18]. The ancient meeting place for the men of the hundred, and the place where decisions were made and agreed, was at Eanferth's hoe which was a round barrow in Round Hill field in Mears Ashby parish from which there were good views of the surrounding countryside[19]. It was on the road from Earls Barton to Mears Ashby opposite the top of Washbrook Lane. Sometime later the court that administered the hundred met in Wellingborough. Another ancient meeting place for two pre-Domesday hundreds was at Finedon (formerly Thyngden) and this tradition continued into the fourteenth century at least[20]. The place name Thyngden means the valley where the assembly took place. The ancient division of counties into hundreds was an efficient way of organizing that lasted well into the nineteenth century.

In 1086 when the Domesday survey was completed each settlement in Hamfordshoe, (Doddington, Earls Barton, Ecton, Holcot, Mears Ashby, Sywell, Wellingborough with Hardwick, and Wilby) had a similar hidage[21]. Wilby may have originally started out as a hamlet

18 Anderson, O.S. (1934). *The English Hundred Names*, p. xxviii, Lunds Universitets.

19 See *Victoria County History of Northamptonshire*, volume 4, p. 112.

20 Hart, C. (1990).

21 Baring F. (1902). The Hidation of Northamptonshire in 1086, *English Histor-*

attached to the larger settlement at Doddington, and Mears Ashby may have been a small settlement within the large Anglo-Saxon estate centred at Earls Barton. The Danish place name suffix '-by' suggests that Wilby split from Doddington after 850[22].

Domesday Book

In common with many other places in the Midlands, the first description of Wellingborough appears in Domesday Book. In 1085 the king sent commissioners throughout most of England to find out what there was and how much it was worth. They came and basically asked what villages and manors are here, who owns the manors and the land, and who owned the land at the time of the Conquest in 1066? A second wave of commissioners came to check what had been said the first time and appeals were heard at public gatherings. Once agreed at local level, all this information was compiled into the Domesday Book of 1086 which tells us that there were forty-eight households at Wedlingburie. As such, it was relatively large and was in the top twenty per cent of settlements by size with a population around 225 people. One population centre was based on the Crowland manor and there was probably another one centred around Broad Green. The entire population of Northamptonshire at that time was somewhere around thirty thousand[23].

From the Domesday survey we know that the Abbot of Crowland held five and a half hides and that there was land for twelve ploughs. This basically means that the land could be ploughed by twelve ploughs each drawn by eight oxen. On the land managed by the lord for his personal use, there was one plough with one slave, twenty-one villeins, a priest, seven bordars (smallholders) and eleven sokemen (men with some freedom) with eleven ploughs. There were also two mills and thirty acres of meadow. It was worth six pounds[24].

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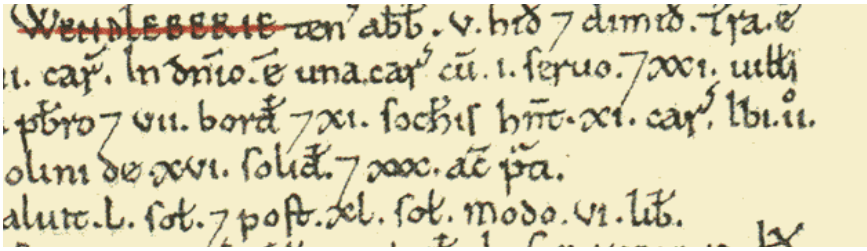
ical Review, 17, 65, 76-83. Hardwick in ancient time was partly in Hamfordshoe and partly in Orlingbury hundred.

22 Foard, G. (2013). Rural settlement. In T. Partida, D. Hall & G. Foard (Eds), *An atlas of Northamptonshire: The medieval and early-modern landscape,* pp. 81-124, Oxbow Books.

23 See opendomesday.org; Terrett, I.B. (1954). 'Northamptonshire', in H.C. Darby and I.B. Terrett (Eds) *The Domesday Geography of Midland England*, pp. 379-416, Cambridge University Press.

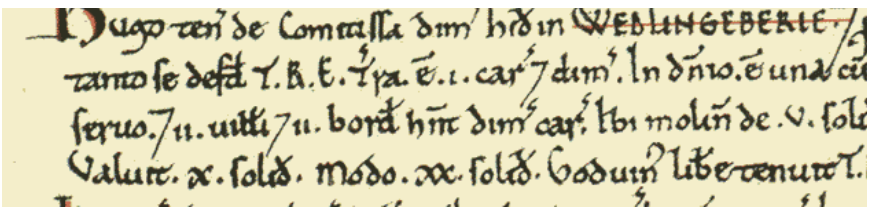
24 Page, F.M., (1936). *Wellingborough manorial accounts A.D. 1258-1323. From*

The abbey's five and a half hides probably covered an area of about 660 acres. The abbey had held the land in 1066 and Crowland's holdings at Wellingborough as recorded in Domesday Book are shown below.



[Image taken from opendomesday.org created by A. Powell-Smith, J. Palmer and G. Slater]

The king's niece Countess Judith had a smaller possession of half a hide and half a virgate and a mill worth twenty shillings. There were two villeins, two smallholders and one slave on her land. The annual value to the lord was one pound. The lord in 1066 was Godwin and in 1086 the immediate lord over the tax paying peasants was Hugh. Judith also held part of a ploughland the lord of which in 1066 was Bondi the Constable and in 1086 Gilbert was the immediate lord over the tenants. Judith was the widow of Waltheof, one-time Earl of Northampton, an Anglo-Saxon nobleman executed in 1076. After being unceremoniously thrown into a ditch his body was eventually buried at Crowland Abbey where, it was said, his head miraculously re-attached itself to his body. Judith's main possession at WEDLINGEBERIE is shown below.



[Image taken from opendomesday.org created by A. Powell-Smith, J. Palmer and G. Slater]

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the account rolls of Crowland Abbey, p. xiv, Northamptonshire Record Society.

Bishop Geoffrey, a close advisor to the king, held one virgate or about thirty acres as tenant-in-chief [25]. In 1066 the lord of this land was Edwin son of Burgred and in 1086 the lord over the peasants was Norigot. Another hide of land which seems to have been overlooked in the Domesday survey was held by the Earl of Leicester in the twelfth century[26]. The Abbey and the other tenants-in-chief also held land in many other places.

The Domesday survey also tells us about a difficult time for the county namely the damage done by a marauding Danish army in 1065 that murdered, burnt crops, destroyed buildings, stole livestock and took people into slavery[27]. This event reduced the productivity of the land and evidence of the damage caused comes from the values given to estates in both 1066 and 1086. The abbey's land that was valued at two pounds ten shillings in 1066 was worth six pounds in 1086 and Judith's holdings worth one pound were previously worth half as much. Irthlingborough was rated at four pounds a year after the devastation but was worth eleven pounds in the survey. The increase in values reflects the recovery and restocking that took place in the twenty years after the Danes swept through the region.

The Englishmen who held land in Wellingborough in 1066 saw their lands taken from them. Edwin held land in fourteen places before the Conquest, including Harrowden, but in 1086 he was the immediate lord over the peasants at Lowick and Stanion[28]. As such, and assuming it is the same person, although much was taken from him he must have kept some favour with the king. Edwin's father, Burgred, was a rich landholder in the East Midlands and was doubtless connected to the previous English royalty[29]. Bondi the Constable held land in thirty-seven places in 1066 including elsewhere in Hamfordshoe but was reduced to being lord over the peasants in only three places afterwards. As for Godwin, this was a common name in England at the time and it is hard to tell whether he kept any land.

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25 Hart (1970) p.47.

26 Salzman, L.F. (1937). *A history of the county of Northampton*, Vol. 4, pp-135-146.

27 Round, J.T. (1900). The hidation of Northamptonshire, *English Historical Review*, 15(57), 78-86.

28 www.opendomesday.org

29 Williams, A. (2011). *The world before Domesday: The English aristocracy 900-1066*. London: Bloomsbury.

The different types of people mentioned in 1086 tell us something about social divisions at the time. Villeins were unfree peasants who occupied and farmed plots of land for themselves but were bound to and owed loyalty to their lord to whom they paid dues and gave services such as working on the lord's land at harvest time. Although villeins had more rights than others, they were not free men and could not leave the manor without the lord's consent. Bordars were below villeins but held a cottage with enough land to provide for a family. Sokemen held a form of land tenure (socage) such that they had to make regular payments to the abbot to get out of doing regular work for the manor and to gain certain freedoms.

All classes would have attended the manor court to pay rents and dues and to receive fines when they had transgressed[30]. The social structures recorded in Domesday Book and which survived well into the medieval period probably had their origins long before and most likely originated in a system under which people had become servile (owing service to a lord) in order to receive some level of protection from the lord who controlled where they were living[31].

Not much is known about the next two hundred years or so except that a market charter was granted in 1201 indicating that the town was substantial and well-placed in terms of trade. It would have acted as the market for Hamfordshoe and proximity to a main road heading north out of London and an east-west route between Cambridge and Coventry is likely to have boosted the town's importance[32]. Many towns were granted market charters around this time and they served as more than just a place to trade. The market at that time is thought to have been held at the west end of what is now Market Street where market crosses once stood and this would explain why the west end of Market Street opens out into a wider space. Markets raised income through tolls and they were a place for people to meet and exchange information and ideas. Official proclamations were read on market days.

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30 Page, F.M., (1936). *Wellingborough manorial accounts A.D. 1258-1323. From the account rolls of Crowland Abbey*, p. xvi, Northamptonshire Record Society.

31 Page, p. xv.

32 WEUS p.6

CHAPTER 2

LIFE ON CROWLAND MANOR

Crowland Abbey was the dominant landowner in Wellingborough from around 950 to the 1530s. It was one of the abbey's most important estates and its largest in Northamptonshire. By 1258, and perhaps long before, the monks at Crowland had perfected a detailed and comprehensive system of accounting for income and expenditure on the lord's home farm; an early profit and loss account. Although the lord's home farm (the demesne) was a small part of the whole manor a picture of the wider manor comes from a survey undertaken for the abbot in June 1320[33]. Although there were other manors in the town by the fourteenth century, including an estate held by William of Raunds and one belonging to the Earl of Leicester, the fortunate survival of Crowland's accounts and the manorial survey tell us much about Wellingborough at the time. After local poet John Askham visited the old abbey site in the town in 1868 he began his poem *The Monks of Croyland* thus,

Croyland may be bought and sold,
But the buried monks of old
Still their ghostly tenure hold.

What Askham was saying is that although it was over 300 years since the manor had been taken out of the abbey's hands its influence on the shape of the town was still there to see, with a bit of poetic imagination.

Income and expenditure

In 1258/9, receipts from rents, cheese, straw, barley and other things on the manor farm were £74-6s-11d. Expenses were £74-15s-9¼ d and so the lord owed the reeve 8s-10¼ d. The accounts reveal spending on everything needed to make the manor function. In 1321/2,

33 Page, F.M. (1936). *Wellingborough manorial accounts A.D. 1258-1323. From the account rolls of Crowland Abbey*, Northamptonshire Record Society. Page dates the survey to 1320 but other sources give 1319.

income came from rents, fines, wheat, barley, peas, grass, garden produce, skins, cheese and butter. Expenses in that year covered the blacksmith for plough irons and shoeing horses, for carpenters to fell two trees and make ploughs and for mending ploughs and harrows, building stables and a hen house, for building work including the 'great gates', mending the walls of the herb garden and roofing the great pigeon-cote. Other expenses were for hiring boys to plough while men were away sowing, hiring a boy for four days while the shepherd drove 160 hoggets (sheep) to Langtoft, mending the ovens, carts, saddles, doors and gates among other things, tiling roofs, spreading manure, and for Brother Luke of Stanford and Richard of Glatton with four boys coming to supper.

There were stewards, clerks, masons, cowherds, shepherds, swineherds, ploughmen, dairymaids, thatchers and gardeners. They purchased, amongst other things, pig sties, cloth for sacks, planks, brushwood for sheep bedding, door locks, hinges, fastenings for the great gates, and candles. Foods included bread, ale, beef, mutton, mustard (for the ploughmen's lunches), herring and whiting, garlic, salt, wine, larks and eggs.

The abbot's survey of 1320 identifies 140 rent-paying tenants although not all were named. Assuming that each was married with children this puts the population at 630 at least and excludes those who worked on other manors in the town and those who were free from manorial control. The survey tells us something about how people lived and the customs and practices of the time. The social structure that it reveals had probably existed for some time and life on other manors was probably very similar. The survey tells us that the manor headquarters, which were behind and below the current Hind Hotel, was over seven acres and surrounded by ditches and walls. There was a hall, chamber, kitchen, grange, stable, cowshed, a granary roofed with laths and straw, two dovecots and an orchard.

The survey reveals that there were 480 acres of arable land that in ordinary years were worth about ten pounds. One plough team with six oxen could plough half an acre. The crops were wheat, rye and barley in one field and drage (mixed cereals), oats and beans in another. The other field was fallow. The fields were Southfield, Upfield, East field and West field and these field names were in use

until the eighteenth century. Twenty-nine acres of meadow land were mown each year in le Brodedole, le Mersh and Abbotsholm. Twenty-eight acres of pasture supported fourteen cows and their calves and 200 ewes. There were four common ovens, two water mills, a fulling mill (a water mill used in the manufacture of cloth) and a fishpond.

Fishponds were an important part of medieval life as fish provided an essential supplement to otherwise narrow diets. Given the location of the manor headquarters, damming-up Swanspool brook and making a fishpond seems relatively easy. Fish might have been netted in the Nene and taken up to the pond in barrels. They would eat all sorts; pike, bream, roach, tench and eels were often on the menu. Fisherfolk might be interested to know that in 1214 the abbot of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire offered to pay six pence for any pike caught in his fishery of four or five feet[34]. A four-foot pike weighs about twenty-eight pounds. A five-foot pike would smash modern angling records.

Social structure

A legal case from 1285 to determine a person's status gives a glimpse into the ties between people and manor[35]. The Abbot of Crowland brought an action against Richard de Thrupp of Wellingborough. At that time, a person's status as free or villein was hereditary. Richard claimed that he was a free man because his great-grandfather had been born a free man on another lord's land at Wansford and that as such he was also a free man. The judges pressed the jury about Richard's great grandfather but they did not know as it was 'time out of mind'. Pressed further, the jurors also said that he had not been born elsewhere but on the abbot's land in Wellingborough. As such, the abbot took Richard as his villein, essentially meaning that he was tied to the manor, that he could not leave without permission and that he had to do service for the lord.

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34 Steane, J.M. (1971). The medieval fishponds of Northamptonshire, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, IV, No. 5, pp.299-310; Salzman, L.F. (1923). *English industries of the Middle Ages*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

35 Brand, P. (2016). Judges and juries in civil litigation in later medieval England: The Millon thesis reconsidered. *Journal of Legal History*, 37(1), 1-40.

Among the people who worked on the manor there was a clear class structure. The different classes are described below following closely a translation of the 1320 survey and in possible order of decreasing social status.

Free tenants

Seven free tenants are named. Richard de Ketene held from the lord of the manor one messuage (a dwelling house with land and outbuildings) and a quarter of one virgate of land rendering each year two shillings at the feast of St Guthlac. He had to find one man for the hay boon-reaping receiving one meal, namely bread, ale, meat or fish, and cheese and the boon-reaping was worth one penny beyond the meal. He was obliged to attend the view of frankpledge (collective responsibility) twice a year and to be loyal to the lord[36]. Richard also held one quarter of a virgate of arable land, worth seven pence a year at the feast of St Guthlac and one white goose at the feast of St Michael, value two pence. He gave for the custom called longavering a halfpenny and half of a quarter penny at the feast of St Thomas the Apostle[37].

Sokemen

Seven sokemen are named including William de Thorp, Richard Christian, John Rouk and the heirs of Gilbert Abel who held between them one virgate of arable land in soke (ie., in return for a payment) and rendering each year rent of eight pence at the feast of All Saints. They also gave two and a half pence at the feast of St Thomas the Apostle, two and a quarter pence before Christmas for longavering, and they paid a fine (a fee) called an ingressum for entry into their land.

Toft sokemen

There were thirty-five toft sokemen. John son of William de Thorp and Roger Christian held a toft (a farmstead) in soke and they ploughed for one day at the winter sowing and for one day at the Lent sowing. What they ploughed they had to harrow and that was worth three pence. They also had to plough the fallow land for one day and ploughing with six oxen was worth six pence such that whoever had one ox gave one penny per day. They had to find one man

36 A court which regulated the behaviour of workers on the manor.

37 A rent that required driving three horses anywhere twice a year for the abbot and sometimes partially commuted to other labour (See Page, *Wellingborough Manorial Accounts 1258-1323*, p. xxvii).

to hoe for one day and that work was worth a half penny, to find one man to mow for one day worth three pence and find one man to reap for one day in autumn and that was worth one and a half pence.

At Crowland they were to do four carrying services each year worth twelve pence paid at Lent. They were to find with their fellows five carts to carry the lord's timber wherever he wished, so that they can go and return for one day, and that carriage was worth ten pence at two pence per cart. Once a year they had to find three horses which were to lead wherever the lord wishes in England. This custom called longavering was worth two shillings. If they brewed they had to pay a toll called tolcester of one penny per gallon. They gave four hens worth one penny each and if they had a colt they could not sell it outside the manor without paying four pence. They were liable to give leirewyk and gersuma and an entry fine (ingressum). They also paid one penny if they wanted to slaughter or to sell a pig over a year old, or a halfpenny if under a year old and they had to pay tallage[38].

Molmen

Molmen were a class above villeins but below that of freeholders. They paid rent that released them from labouring obligations. Thirty-five molmen each held half a virgate of arable land in villeinage. William de Thorp held half a virgate paying for it eight shillings four times a year. He attended the big boon-reaping with two men receiving from the lord one meal per day, and the value of that custom over and above the meal was two pence. For the second boon-reaping he had to find one man receiving from the lord one meal per day. He had to find one man for a lovebone without a meal and that work was worth one and a half pence. He paid fees for selling certain horses and pigs (folesaves and swinesaves) along with gersuma, leirewyk, ingressum and tallage.

Villeins

A villein was a peasant and tenant farmer tied to the manor and a virgate was an area of land that could be ploughed by two oxen in a ploughing season, equivalent to thirty acres. Thirty-six villeins each held half a virgate of arable land in villeinage including Richard

38 Leyrwyk was a fine possibly for the promiscuity of someone in a tenant's family. Gersuma was a fine (fee) paid for when a new tenant entered land. Tallage was a tax paid to the lord of the manor.

Poketo who held half a virgate worth seven shillings a year paid in instalments at the feast of St Andrew two shillings, at the feast of St Guthlac two shillings, at the feast of St Botolph two shillings, and at Michaelmas one shilling. Richard had to do carrying services called lodesilver which meant that with others he took seven horse loads of grain to Crowland for which services he gave eighteen pence at Pentecost. Richard together with others mowed meadows, carried the hay to the manor and stacked it.

Richard worked seventeen days for the lord in the autumn. He was to come with two men to the big boon-reaping receiving from the lord one meal. The boon-reaping over and above the meal was worth two pence. For the second boon-reaping he was to find one man and receive from the lord one meal a day. He was to find for one lovebone one man[39] without a meal and that work was worth two and a half pence. Richard together with others had to carry all the lord's grain until all had been carried. If he brewed he had to give one gallon of ale worth one penny for the custom called tolcestre. He had to give four pence for a licence to sell colts according to a custom called folsanes.

Five-acre men

Three 'five-acre men' are named. John Fabian held of the lord five acres of arable land and paid four shillings at the four terms of the year. He had to find one man for the big boon-reaping. He paid folesanes, swynsanes, tolcestre, leyrwyk, gersuma and tallage like others[40].

Cottars

Cottars were a relatively lowly class renting a small plot of land with a cottage and giving services. Seventeen cottars are named such as Robert Herl who held one messuage in cottage tenure, paying three shillings four times a year. He came with one man to the big boon-reaping worth one penny. Cottars paid the same fees as others.

All tenants with grazing rights paid thirteen shillings and four pence (two-thirds of a pound) at the feast of St John the Baptist.

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39 Boon works were additional work required by the lord over and above regular weekly work such as at busy times like harvesting.

40 Tolcestrum was the custom by which tenants that brewed gave a gallon of ale or paid fine to brew; effectively a toll on brewing. Folsanes was a payment for permission to sell male foals. Swynsanes was payment for selling or killing pigs.

Tithe barn in Burystead Place. Another tithe barn behind buildings at the junction of Market Street and Cambridge Street was demolished in the 1930s.

Business on the Manor

Organization

Coming across clearly in the manorial survey of 1320 are detail and structure. In full, it reads like a set of medieval job descriptions which in relation to working for the lord it was. They even drilled down to specify who was entitled to a meal when working for the abbey and the value of work with and without a meal. This form of day-labour payment continued for a long time. An assessment of wages for Northamptonshire carried out in 1560 specified, for example, that men who reaped wheat and rye should receive four pence a day with meat and drink or six pence without. Every woman reaper was to get three pence and five pence respectively. The assessments for 1667 show the same approach with a 'man-reaper' getting six pence a day with food or one shilling without. The difference in wages for men and women was still evident since a 'woman-reaper' got four pence with food and eight pence without. The pay differentials applied to other occupations since a manservant aged twenty years

received three pounds a year but a maid servant aged twenty received one pound and fifteen shillings[41].

The medieval manor was run as a business with targets, expectations and punishments usually in the form of a fine. Things had to get done on time and people were expected to perform a range of jobs as needs must. The harvest was crucial to everyone's survival and had to be gathered field by field and stored on time. Many day-to-day activities were controlled such as brewing and selling livestock. As on other manors, courts were held regularly to administer the manor and to fine people who transgressed against custom and practice.

The amount of land that was needed to sustain an average family in the medieval period was at least ten acres, perhaps more. This was needed for crops, fruit, vegetables and livestock. One aspect of the manorial accounts that has recently come to light is that the five-acre men and the cottars (tied cottagers), and presumably some others, had far less than ten acres. A question then arises concerning how people got around this problem and it seems that they found three ways to do it; selling their labour for wages, selling surplus produce, and by buying or selling land or property[42]. Simon le Barkere a free tenant may, his name suggests, have supported his income by tanning. William le Ironmonger, a cottar, needs no explanation. The fulling mill suggests that some tenants were involved in making cloth which may have been sold at local markets. From the abbot's income we know that people were brewing and presumably some brewed and sold ale from their houses. People certainly sold horses and pigs which gave the abbot a customary income but they also sold sheep and poultry. Property transactions were quite common.

Most of the business of the manor was conducted in the main hall but various announcements and proclamations were made in the church as that was the one place where everyone gathered. The land cultivated by a tenant on the manor, in common with other medieval towns and villages, was distributed throughout the open fields and was not all in one area. People farmed strips of land each of about half an acre but in

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41 Putnam, B.H. (1927). Northamptonshire wage assessments of 1560 and 1667, *Economic History Review*, 1(1), 124-134.

42 Kilby, S. (2010). Struggle and enterprise: The experience of servile peasants in Wellingborough 1258-1322. *Midland History*, 35(1), 7-27.

the passage of time an individual's strips became dispersed across the different fields[43].

This system of strip farming had pre-Conquest origins and may have had been designed to distribute land of differing quality and usage among the tenants and to average out the distance that each tenant had to go to his land. Another reason is that Wellingborough had four large open fields (basically north, south, east and west) and one of these would lay fallow each year and be used for grazing. A person's strips could not all be in the same place as if they were then each year about a quarter of the people would not be able to grow anything. This system, while evidently efficient with small populations, became increasingly inefficient although in Wellingborough's case it lasted until the open fields were enclosed in 1765. Strip farming created ridge and furrow patterns in the fields which can still be seen in the Midlands but Wellingborough's ridge and furrow has been lost to housing, industry and ploughing. Faint traces of it, however, can still be seen in the Castle Fields, abutting Irthlingborough Road.

Crowland's manor at Wellingborough produced good surpluses for the abbey to which crops and livestock were carted-off regularly. The manor accounts consistently show farm produce going to Crowland with little produce coming in. Two swans were presented in 1289, however, from its manor at Cottenham for the purpose of starting a swan farm and it is tempting to think this is the origin of Swanspool[44].

Life in the medieval period was doubtless very tough but Miss Page concluded her detailed analysis of the manorial accounts by saying, 'the economic administration of the manor was by no means harsh, and the abbot's profits were probably gained with the minimum of oppression'. This is pretty much the same conclusion reached in a more recent interpretation of Wellingborough's manorial structure and economics[45]. The manor was generally supportive of tenants and this coupled with good harvests provided the conditions for an enterprising culture. It was the weather much more than the lord that affected living conditions at least during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

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43 Page, p. xxv.

44 Page, p. xxxi

45 Page, p. xxxiii; Kilby, S. (2010). Struggle and enterprise: The experience of servile peasants in Wellingborough 1258-1322, *Midland History*, 35(1), 7-27.

Jurisdiction of the abbot

The abbot sometimes visited the town and in 1267 his entourage consumed a cow, many pigs, pigeons, hens, geese and cheeses. A new abbot elected in 1280 instigated a building programme including new halls in Wellingborough. Manorial courts were held each year at which people paid various administrative fees and fines for offences committed. Like other hundreds, Hamfordshoe had its own court to try serious offences and around 1250 the abbot was given the right to dispense justice without troubling the hundredal court[46]. This benefitted the manor since successive abbots could impose fines and confiscate the possessions of felons and was the beginning and end of justice in Wellingborough for most people, at least for a time.

In 1322 a public gathering appears to have celebrated the hanging of a man and his wife, William and Alice, for sheep stealing and housebreaking. The accounts show that two young pigs were consumed as part of the celebration. The king's Justices, however, investigated these events when they came to the county in 1329[47]. The abbot claimed from 'time immemorial' the right of *ingfanthief* which allowed him to execute people for crimes committed on his manor. The Justices disapproved of this because the offences for which people had been hanged were committed elsewhere and, as such, the abbot had exceeded his jurisdiction. They considered charging the steward, Robert of Granchester, who had presided over the hanging but settled on taking the right of ingfanthief back into the king's hands and on imposing a fine. After all, they thought that the abbey had done the right thing by custom and that justice had been served.

Not long after the nationwide Peasants' Revolt in 1381, a commission was set-up in 1383 to enquire into a rebellion by the bondsman and tenants of the abbey who were aggrieved enough to break into the abbot's close and carry off his goods and threaten to burn his house[48]. The tenants claimed that the abbot was unreasonably imposing a

46 Page, p. xviii; p. xx

47 Sutherland, D.W. (1983). *The Eyre of Northamptonshire, 3-4 Edward III*, Vol. 1. London: Selden Society.

48 Northamptonshire Notes and Queries (NN&Q). VI, pp.156-164; Cal. Patent Rolls, Ric II, Vol 2, p. 357-358; Patent Rolls of Henry IV, Vol. 4 (1412).

variable charge called the Ayeld each year such that they could not afford it and the arbitrators determined that it should be commuted to a total sum of four pounds yearly. They also decided that the abbot should carry the costs of collecting the rents instead of the tenants having to pay for a collector, that the abbot and convent should pay for repairs to the church, that common land called Abbot's Holm be returned to the tenants, that the common fishery should be returned to tenants' use, and that the abbot withdraws claims of trespass against certain people.

The abbot named the rebellious tenants as John Houton, Laurence Palmer, John Malpas, William Wakelyn, Walter Bengeworth, Henry Launden, John Colyngtrouth, John Gaytyngton, Neel Mercer, Robert Taverner, Nicholas Sherman, William Deystre, William Toppying, Henry Toppyng, William Steer, John Waldegrave, Richard Milner, John Hunte, Adam Boseyate, William Gladman, John Burton, Robert Stodevyle, Nicholas Bisshop, Robert Sharp and others. Some of these names occur on the 1381 taxation roll. William Torping paid five shillings. Richard Milnere and his wife Agnes paid two shillings and six pence. John and Margareta Hunte paid four shillings. Adam and Mariota Boseyate paid three shillings and four pence. Their payments were higher than many others paid suggesting that they were among the wealthier residents.

The abbot and his officials at Wellingborough had evidently tried to exert their authority by taking back various privileges and rights such that the tenants objected. The use of arbitrators to settle the dispute indicates the growing strength of labour following the mortality crises brought about by the Black Death not long before this event.

The plague

The abbey's accounts give a rich picture of how Wellingborough functioned in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Without them, there would be a large gap in our understanding between the brief description given in 1086 and the sixteenth century when new sources of information start to appear. Life on the manor had probably been largely the same for centuries and probably continued in much the same way until the plague swept through England in 1348 and again in the 1360s. The plague struck at a time when the population of Northamptonshire was quite high

and a series of famines from 1315-1322 in combination with bad weather had led to a fragile economy[49]. The plague carried with it a very high mortality rate and a third or more of the population may have died from it. At Crowland's manors in Cambridgeshire, for example, thirty-five out of fifty landholders died at Oakington, twenty-two out of forty-two at Dry Drayton, and thirty-three out of fifty-eight at Cottenham[50]. At Higham Ferrers, nineteen out of fifty-one people who should have attended a manor court were marked as dead in 1349 and they had died in the previous three weeks[51]. Across the county, 146 out of 281 clergymen died of the plague. A large town like Wellingborough located on popular transport routes must have been similarly affected. To make matters worse, the winter of 1348/9 was one of persistent rain, sodden fields and unharvested crops. In the long run though, population decline created a shortage of labour that began to change the relationships that people had with the landowning classes.

49 Pryor, F. (2011). *The making of the British landscape*, Penguin Books.

50 Page, F.M. (1934). *The estates of Crowland Abbey: A study in manorial organization*, pp. 120-121, Cambridge University Press.

51 Groome, N. (1983). Black death in the hundred of Higham Ferrers, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, Vol. 6, No. 6, pp. 309-311.

CHAPTER 3

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN AND PEOPLE

The previous chapter shows how Crowland manor functioned and what it was like for people who served the manor. This chapter sheds some more light on the medieval town largely in the fourteenth century.

Early layout

The location of the headquarters of the manor explains the likely initial street pattern on a north-south lane (largely on the route of Sheep Street and Silver Street) and a lane running east (now Market Street). The northwards extension of High Street is consistent with the town lying on a major north-south route that influenced the development of the town much more than east-west traffic. There was very likely another manor in the north of the town as the manor held by the Earl of Leicester in the twelfth century was around Buckwell End and Broad Green. Since Wellingborough had a relatively complicated structure in the Middle Ages it seems likely that it began as several centres of activity rather than as one settlement that expanded[52].

Burystead Place seems likely to have been the main access lane into the abbey's headquarters. It heads directly towards a fifteenth century tithe barn and once led to a substantial gated entrance that was taken down around 1700. John Bridges writing in the early 1700s noted that an 'ancient granary' near the tithe barn built in the fifteenth century had recently been demolished. Various fires in the 1700s may have destroyed the last of the medieval buildings if any had survived that long.

At some time, buildings on the west side of Sheep Street were erected on land taken from the manor and Sheep Street extended down towards Swanspool. St John Street, High Street, a shorter Gold Street leading off Broad Green, the West End, East End, Skitterdine, Buckwell End (which once extended into the east side of Bassett's Close) and Jackson's Lane were all in place in or by the fifteenth century. There were at least two greens, Broad and Buckwell, and

52 Wellingborough Extensive Urban Survey (WEUS) pp.12-14

possibly others in the West and East ends. The old street layout and greens located on lanes leading out of the town probably reflected the location of the town's ancient manors[53].

There might have been an isolated medieval hamlet in the parish although there are no references to a hamlet by name and none can be located with certainty. The best candidate is a manor called Westhall which a document of 1711 suggests was somewhere south of the road leading to Wilby. Other sites are in the northwest of the parish since a large amount of medieval pottery was found there in the 1970s. Another site in the northwest of the parish is indicated by the field names Appleby Gate and Appleby Close[54]. The modern parish of Wellingborough that stretches south to the Nene, east to the Ise, north to Harrowden and west to Wilby was in place by the eleventh century and the boundaries have altered little since.

Burystead Place

Little is left from this period in Wellingborough's past. The basic central street layout survives along with some place names and some features of the church. Some field names are very old as meadows called le Brodedole, le Mersh and Abbotsholm are named in the 1320

53 WEUS p.18; WEUS pp. 12-14
54 WEUS p.10

survey. A field map of 1767 shows a meadow called Abbotsholm adjacent to the mill on the Nene. Above Abbotsholm on the west side of London Road were Long Marsh Meadow and Long Marsh Close and they may have previously been called le Mersh.

The 1320 survey also mentions pasture lands called Abboteshay, Birimor and Michelthirspittes. Birimor became Berry Moor Mead and Berry Moor Leys and the name is preserved in Berrymoor Road. Mickleholme meadow was also adjacent to the mill and may have been Michelthirspittes in 1320 although another field map of 1838 shows various fields beginning with Microw, eg. Microw meadow, situated at the bottom of Mill Lane (now Mill Road)[55].

Living conditions

Population and housing

The people of Wellingborough contributed £9-6s-2d in a nationwide taxation of 1334. In Northants, only Northampton and Brackley contributed more which suggests that the town was relatively large in the early fourteenth century and not long before the Black Death reduced the population of England by a third or more. Insofar as the amounts of tax paid were proportional to population, then Wellingborough in 1334 was around one third the size of Northampton[56]. A taxation of 1381 names 143 people at Wellingborough, in many cases man and wife, although this excludes children under fifteen and the poor who were exempt. In round figures, the population appears to have been at least several hundred in the late fourteenth century.

Most people lived in small one- or two-room houses fronting the various lanes, jumbled around the market square and the greens, and filling-in odd spaces. The basic peasant's house was about 13 x 16 feet up to 13 x 33 feet with a partition at one end for animals. There may have been a small room for sleeping or storage in the roof space. Houses were thatched, windows were shuttered not glazed and the earthen floor was covered in straw. For the average peasant, up to the early thirteenth century walls were made of wattle and daub but became more substantial as time progressed. Houses did

55 Palmer & Palmer, *A History of Wellingborough*, chapter 16 lists field names from a map of 1838.

56 Glasscock, R. (1975). *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, Oxford University Press.

not usually last for long, maybe a generation, and new houses were built on the same plot but often on a different alignment. What had served as a house might if sturdy enough be converted into a barn[57].

Straw was used for bedding and as a floor covering. There was a hearth with cooking implements, a table and chairs, and perhaps a storage chest but not much else. Streets had to be wide so that there was enough space for loaded carts to get around uneven road surfaces. Alongside the roads were wide drainage ditches. In amongst the houses were pigsties, chicken runs, ovens, kilns, animal sheds, beehives, dovecotes, pits and wells. Some houses had gardens and courtyards bordered by walls and ditches. Animals and carts were everywhere and it was pitch black at night. Houses were insecure and easily entered by thieves, assailants and animals. It was not a sleepy village. It was a busy centre of work, trade and survival.

Properties

We know a little about some of the property transactions that people made[58]. In 1203, Ralf son of Philip claimed that he had been dispossessed of his free tenement by various men. A court heard his case and decided that he had not been dispossessed and he was fined half a mark for making a false claim and half a mark for foolish speaking. In 1301, Adam de Snypeston obtained from Richard Bernard and Margaret his wife one messuage, one toft (a homestead) and ten acres of land in Wendlingburgh. In 1318, Richard the son of Hugh atte Welle obtained one messuage, half a virgate of land and two acres of meadow from William le Irmongere (the ironmonger) and Maud his wife. In 1332, John the son of Reynold obtained one messuage in Wendlyngburgh from William Bacheler and his wife Isabel. Robert de Snypiston and Joan his wife of Wendlyngburgh sold one messuage and a homestead in Northampton to John and Ellen Vint in 1330.

Properties were usually identified in terms of how they related to others. For instance, a charter of 1389 transferred two messuages

57 Hanawalt, B.A. (1986). *The ties that bound: Peasant families in medieval England*, Oxford University Press.

58 Stenton, D.M. (1930). '*The Earliest Northamptonshire Assize Rolls A.D. 1202 and 1203*', Northamptonshire Record Society; Feet of Fines, www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk

and a croft (a smallholding) in the town from John Burton to John Mareschal. One was one between the tenements of William atte Townsend on the north and John Byschop on the south, the other between the tenements of John Archebolt on the east and Thomas atte Goter on the west and the croft between a tenement of William Faxton on the west and the highway. The witnesses to the charter were William Toppyng, Nicholas Byschop, Richard Milnere, John Rogerson and William Scharp. The surname 'atte Townsend' literally means someone who lived at the edge of town and 'atte Goter' may mean someone who lived near a ditch or other watercourse. Richard atte Gottere was a toft sokeman in 1320 and may have been Thomas's ancestor.

In 1391, William Toppyng, Robert Fyden, Adam Boseyate, John Bysshop and William Rote, chaplain, obtained a messuage and an acre of land from Simon and Margaret Campyoun. In 1415, John Toppying obtained a messuage, twenty acres of land, six acres of meadow, four acres of wood, six acres of pastureland and three shillings and four pence rent from Richard and Alice Toucester.

An appeal of 1389 mentions John Trippe of Wendlyngburgh and Amabel his wife and the warranty of two cottages, one between a tenement of the abbot on the west and the highway on the east, the other between the tenements of Richard Milnere and Robert Fydew[59]. The highway mentioned seems likely to have been Sheep Street. The Abbot of Crowland probably had a house for his use and when he visited and in 1497 the churchwardens had cut down all the trees in the churchyard without consulting him. Abbot Richard turned up with other clergy to hear them and they publicly asked his pardon, which he 'graciously' gave[60].

Regulations

Although people were not then bothered about many of the things that trouble us today they still lived in a regulated society[61]. The regulations were different although some had broadly the same

59 *Calendar of the Close Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office*, Vol. III, Richard II, 1385-9, p.671.

60 *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica No. XI Containing The history and antiquities of Croyland Abbey*, 1783.

61 Rosser, G. (2016). *Towns in medieval England*. Manchester University Press.

intentions. Clean water from springs and wells was important. There may have been open streams in the streets and a town pump. Common privies needed maintaining for health and for decency. Open drains would have run under and past the houses. Cess pits were used to collect waste.

Local ordinances would have stopped people causing public nuisances such as building in ways that disadvantaged others, disrupting water supplies or leaving their dung heap in the road. The butchers would have been expected to hide unsightly waste products from public view and not pollute waterways with animal waste. Tanners likewise. People had to control their animals including pets such that they did not cause damage to gardens or crops. Fines for allowing animals to damage the property of others were common in medieval England.

Hazards

Over 1,500 coroners' inquests survive for Northamptonshire from the fourteenth century and they reveal much about the hazards facing the medieval family. The most likely place of accidental death for children was at home although older children were more likely to have accidents outside. Children often drowned in wells, pits and rivers and older girls were much more likely than older boys to die in household accidents such as by scalding or in fires. Older boys were more likely to be accidentally killed outside the home[62].

Few inquests survive relating specifically to Wellingborough but in 1352 a jury gathered to hear the case of Alice the two-year-old daughter of John Asser. Andrew Burnhard testified that she was found by her father. She had gone to the well of Robert le Flexmonger, put her hand in the bucket, fell into the well and drowned. The bucket was valued at two pence and the town was ordered to cover the well. Alice Pek fell into her own well and drowned in 1349/50 and again the town was ordered to cover it.

Fire was another common cause of accidental death. Infants were often left alone in a cradle by a fire in the house while their parents were out. Livestock could easily get in through doors and windows. Chickens were a menace and caused house fires by entering through

62 Hanawalt (1986).

windows and fluttering about in houses filled with straw. In this way they caused a fire in a house in Strixton in 1354/5 that killed John Podde aged two who had presumably been left alone by his parents. Pigs were also a danger. A pig got into a house in Irchester in 1357/8 and bit two-year-old Matilda Parker daughter of William Parker such that she died. She was killed in the house of Richard Parker which suggests that she was in the care of a family member and alone at the time.

Another feature of the medieval peasant's house was a large pot or pan with boiling water, soup or wort (malt) held over a fire. Pots got knocked over or the tripod collapsed such that scalding was another common cause of accidental death among children. John Wilby aged eight died in such a way in 1344/5 as did Johanna Grube in Simon Taylor's house in 1378/9. For adults, working life was dangerous and a common cause of accidental death among men was falling from ladders, trees, horses or carts. Men in particular fell from carts or loaded carts fell on them. William Clericus (William the clerk) died when he fell from a stack of straw in the barn of Crowland Abbey. Women were more likely to die in accidents in and around the home.

Violence

As well as investigating accidental deaths coroners also investigated violent and suspicious deaths. If a person found a body it was their duty to raise a hue and cry and of others within earshot to go to the scene. A coroner would attend quickly and view the body. Men from surrounding villages were called to form a jury and to hear testimony. If a suspect had fled then the sheriff was ordered to apprehend them.

Inquests show that people were often killed after arguments in the fields, taverns, streets and houses or while attempting burglary or robbery. In most cases both the victim and the assailant were men. Sometimes women were killed by men but rarely were women suspected of murder. One exception is Alice the wife of John Sparhauke (Sparrowhawk) of Wendlyngburgh who in 1407 stabbed Joan Sely in the chest with a knife and killed her. Violence occurred mostly among peasants not the gentry and murder weapons were usually everyday items like knives, tools and cudgels rather than purpose-made weapons like daggers. In the absence of forensic

evidence or eyewitnesses a high proportion of suspects were acquitted although some were hanged[63].

In July 1347 John le Rede found the body of Richard the son of Richard Eliot. The coroner summoned a jury of twelve men from Wilby, Doddington, Hardwick and the town. The jury said that Richard had argued with John the son of Elias le Souter the previous Friday. John struck Richard with a knife in the chest such that he died there and then in the street. The constables apprehended John and the coroner ordered that he be taken to the gaol at Northampton castle. At that time the value of the item used to kill a person or which led to their death was forfeited to the Crown and in this case the knife was worth one penny. In 1360 presumably the same John the son of Ellis le Souter was suspected of the death of Richard Hikson Elyot of Wendlyngburgh so it looks as if he was acquitted the first time[64].

John le Cartere of Great Harrowden was found dead in 1355 with a head wound through to the brain. John Wolrych and Richard Boun testified that John Waryn found him. The jury from neighbouring villages said that John had argued with Robert Tayl and Robert struck him with a hefty piece of wood and fled. The sheriff of Northamptonshire was ordered to capture Robert whose possessions were a cow with calf worth 6s/8d, a sow and four piglets worth 2s/8d, a calf worth two shillings, and his utensils were worth eighteen pence. The cudgel used in the assault was valued at a half penny. Tayl was later pardoned in 1360 for this killing.

A glimpse into what people possessed comes from inquests and at that time about forty-three per cent of suspected felons owned nothing. Many others had possessions worth the equivalent of one- or two-weeks' wages. It is worth bearing in mind however that these figures might be distorted as perhaps people may have been drawn to violence because they were desperately poor.

In 1406, the sheriff was ordered to release Robert Bayley and Richard Baxter of Wellingborough if apprehended. Similarly, Thomas Idelot,

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63 Thornton, M. (2014). "Feloniously slain": Murder and village society in fourteenth-century Northamptonshire, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, No. 67, pp.46-56.

64 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward III, Vol. XI, 1358-61*. HMSO

John Gyboun, Nicholas atte Townsend, Richard Baxter and John Makefay were also not to be detained. In the same year the sheriff was pardoned for allowing the escape of John Sutton of Wendlyngburgh, 'toothdrawere', who had been detained in Northampton goal on suspicion of felony. Andrew Elyot also escaped in 1364 after being detained. One December day in 1415, John Leche out of ancient dislike struck Henry Campion, labourer, with a cudgel or staff. Henry responded with a knife to the chest that quickly killed John[65]. Henry was arrested and held in the gaol at Northampton castle but he was pardoned in 1418 as the jury agreed that he acted in self-defence.

In the absence of any systematic sentencing system there seems to have been little between being acquitted, indefinite imprisonment or execution. Prisoners often died from hunger, thirst or cold as inquests show. One way of avoiding the gallows was to abjure the realm. To do this, a person took sanctuary in a church and confessed their crimes before a coroner. They took an oath to abjure the realm meaning that they were sent to a port, Dover was popular, and from there overseas never to return without royal permission which for most people was never given. The felon who had abjured began their journey from the church gates barefoot, bareheaded and carrying a wooden cross. If they stayed on the king's highway then they had protection from assault. In 1357, Robert Porter quarrelled with Ralph Loche and struck Ralph in the stomach with a sword such that he died instantly. Robert took refuge in the church on Sunday the 16th April and on the 12th May confessed before the coroner that he had killed Ralph and abjured the realm. His chattels were a sword worth twelve pence and he was assigned to Dover[66].

Abjuration usually worked but was not foolproof. In 1322, John of Dicheforde fled to the church at Wootton, confessed that he had robbed and killed a man and abjured the realm. Instead of sticking to the king's highway he ran off into the fields of Collingtree, presumably to escape and avoid exile. A hue and cry raised the inhabitants who ran after him and he was beheaded while fleeing. His head was taken to Northampton castle by order of the coroner[67].

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65 The National Archives, JUST3/195, membrane 93.

66 The National Archives, JUST2/113, membrane 40.

67 Gross, C. (1896). *Select cases from the Coroners' Rolls A.D. 1265-1423*, p.76, Selden Society.

Free men

While many people were tied to a manor some were free to make a living in other ways.

Clergy and king's clerks
In 1335, John de Wendlyngburgh was imprisoned in York castle until the king released him on the understanding that he would appear before him and his council and accept its judgment. Perhaps the same John de Wendlingburgh was in trouble in 1344 having been arrested and imprisoned but in 1350 he was a clerk in the diocese of Lincoln[68]. In 1362 Robert de Wendlynburgh was a cannon at Chichester and John was treasurer there. The Abbess of Wilton was ordered by the king in 1374 to grant John, his clerk, a yearly pension as the king had his 'advancement at heart.' Likewise, in 1375 the Abbess of Godestowe was ordered to provide a pension to John de Wendlyngburgh the younger and king's clerk. His father, John the elder, had acted for the king's council on secret business and was also rewarded for his loyalty.

John the elder was nominated in 1388 for the post of chirographer (a writer) in the Court of the Common Bench in recognition of his long service to Edward III. On the gift of Richard II, John the elder was made parson or warden of a chapel in Sherborne in 1395 but died the same year aged about 80[69]. Sir John de Wendlyngburgh was prebendary in the cathedral church at Crediton in 1393 and Canon of Beverley in 1402.

Commerce
Rabbit farming was big business and in 1337 Gilbert de Wendlyngburgh was granted a licence to take ten thousand rabbit skins 'from beyond the seas' to Middlesborough[70]. Some years later, presumably the same Gilbert had moved up to become a king's merchant living in Bruges and he was involved in helping the king finance the Hundred Years War.

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68 Calendar of selections from Papal Regesta, Vol. III.

69 Calendar of Close Rolls, Richard II; Page, W. (1908). *A History of the County of Dorset*, vol. 2, p.105; Tout, T.F. (1930) *Chapters in the administrative history of medieval England: The wardrobe, the chamber and the small seas*. Vol. V, Manchester University Press.

70 Gould, D. (2017). The distribution of rabbit warrens in medieval England: An east-west divide. *Landscape History*, 38(1), 25-41.

We know that Gilbert was connected to the town because, apart from taking its name, in 1369 he was described as the uncle of John the son of Robert Daysoule of Wendelburgh. Gilbert's context is that shortly after Edward III captured Calais it became a centre for the European wool trade. Edward sent merchants to Calais to help set up trade links and what we would now call infrastructure. For this they received various sweeteners such as land and buildings[71].

After taking loans and making deals Gilbert had difficulty in 1348 selling cloth quickly enough to pay the king such that others were invited to step-in and pay the interest on his debts[72]. Gilbert and two others had contracted with the king to collect the customs and subsidies in 'all the ports of England' and to raise £50,000 but plague intervened. Because of the very high mortality in Europe which reduced tax revenues Edward III allowed a change in the agreement such that they could collect tax from wool and fells (skins).

Gilbert survived all this since in 1350 he and others were still the port tax collectors although in the same year the king ordered the Fleet prison to receive Gilbert and keep him safely until further notice. In 1354 he acknowledged receipt of a debt of 400 marks (a mark was two thirds of a pound). In 1356 Gilbert and his colleagues had a house, brewhouse and seven shops in London taken into the king's hands until such time as they did what he expected of them.

Peter de Wendlyngburgh was a merchant, possibly a draper. As executor of a will in 1349 he collected debts owed by the Abbot of Lesnes[73]. Peter died in 1361 and at that time if a person with property died without a will there was an enquiry to determine what they possessed and who their heirs were. In his case, it found that he lived with his wife Agnes at the Abbey of Lesnes and held two properties along with a dovecot and arable land from the abbot. He had no known heirs but there is an unusual note in the enquiry that says that all his life he was known as Peter de Wendlyngburgh or

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71 Unwin, G. (1918). *Finance and trade under Edward III*, p.314, Routledge.

72 Fryde, E.B. (1966). *Some business transactions of York merchants: John Goldbetter, William Acastre and Partners, 1336-1349*, York: St. Anthony's Press.

73 *Calendar of wills proved in the court of Husting*, London 1258-1688, Part I, p. 645.

Peter atte Cokke[74]. There is a hint here that atte Cokke may have derived from the name of a house or inn in the town that he lived in or owned at some time.

John de Wendelyngburgh, 'pouchemaker', in his will of 1380 gave forty pounds and some furniture to his wife and bequests to the craft of skinners, to the pouch makers of London, to William Hyne de Wendlyngburgh and Agnes his wife, his sister and his servants. His wife was to enjoy a life interest in all his tenements in St Botolph and St Giles without Cripplegate. Eva, his wife, made her will four months later and desired to be buried in the church of St Botolph without Aldrichesgate and made various religious bequests. To Isabella Haliwel, Johanna her servant, Agnes her late husband's sister, and to her godchildren she left sums of money and apparel including a russet cloak with fur and a blue tunic furred with black lambs' wool. Her tenement in Cripplegate was to be sold for the good of her soul. This John we might assume had made a successful living in London. If they had children, then none were named in their will and it looks as if Eva knew she was about to die shortly after her husband. But there is a little more to this story.

Eleven years later in 1391 two men were called to answer allegations of fraud. John de Wendelyngeburghe had received by deed a tenement with a shop from John Elys, pouchemaker and Eva his wife in St Botolph without Aldrichesgate. These must be the same people mentioned above. The deed in question had later been falsified and the seal tampered with in an attempt to gain by deception. One of the men who had done so was put in the pillory with a bare head and bare feet for an hour a day with the false deed around his neck and forever held to be false and infamous. The other man who wrote the false deed was also pilloried and barred from continuing his occupation of scrivener (scribe) in London for such time as it pleased the authorities[75].

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74 *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, Vol. XI, Edward III, 1935, p.409, HMSO.

75 Riley, H. (1868). *Memorials of London and London life in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries*.

Medieval surnames

From the information about Wellingborough six to seven hundred years ago we can catch a glimpse of how much people moved around. The 1320 survey lists a lot of people although not everyone, likewise the 1381 taxation returns. Although they were not complete listings of residents not many names in 1320 were also present in 1381. Surnames present at both times, about two generations apart, are atte Goter, Bonde, Fitzdeiu/Fydew, Palmer, Poketo, Taylor, Worlich and possibly Bate/Pate. Idelot occurs in 1320 and again in 1406. Three reasons help to explain this. The 1320 survey excluded a lot of people so we simply don't know if some of the surnames that appear later were present sixty years earlier. Some surnames may have disappeared because the Black Death which killed up to half of the English population in 1348/9 doubtless wiped-out some families or at least the male line. Another possibility is that after the plague people left the town for better opportunities.

More names are listed in a taxation of 1542/3 and a few names persisted from around 1381; Boseyate, Cok/Cook, Couper, Danyot/Dennet, Faxton, Palmer, Bate/Pote/Pate, and Wyat and at least two surnames present in 1320 were present in 1542/4 namely Idelot/Edlot and Worliche. It is impossible to say that the later Worliches, for example, were descended for the earlier ones but it seems more likely than not. The name Idlott continued in the town until the early eighteenth century and Worliche persisted into the nineteenth century.

In the 1320 survey, people were named in four ways. Some had an inherited surname such as Richard Osegod, and Ymania Grys. Some took their names from occupations such as Adam le Sangster (singer), John le Cartere, and Simon le Barkere (possibly a tanner). Some were taking surnames from places such as Richard de Ketene (Ketton) and Richard de Glatton. Others were taking surnames from features such as Hugh atte Welle (at or near a well), William atte Brok (at the brook), Andrew ad Portam (near the gate) and Adam in le Lane. By 1381 all but two in the list of people who paid tax had an inherited surname such as Simon Lilleborne the butcher and Hugh Baxster the baker. Surnames were also derived from nicknames or physical features but how Simon Prikebigge got his name remains a mystery[76].

76 Simon was an inquest juror at Sywell in 1377/8, The National Archives, JUST2/119A, membrane 5A.

CHAPTER 4

ALL HALLOWS CHURCH

Christianity had a much greater influence on people and society than it does now. In the medieval era most people were expected to accept certain beliefs and participate in church rituals even though they did not know much about the details of Christian doctrine. To them, purgatory and Hell were real but Heaven awaited even the most wretched peasant if they followed a Godly life. Attendance at church was expected and non-attendance carried the risk of punishment until the mid-seventeenth century when such laws were suspended after the English civil war. The ancient parish church of Wellingborough dedicated to All Hallows in the town centre had a general congregation of 526 in 1851 with 450 Sunday scholars. New Anglican churches and a Catholic church were built in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century to cater for the expanding population.

Origins and dedication

The relatively large size of Wellingborough and ownership of the main manor by an abbey from around 950 A.D. are reasons to think that there was a pre-Conquest church. This is backed up by a claim that a church was granted to Crowland Abbey in the tenth century[77]. A priest is mentioned in the 1086 description of Wellingborough and it was included in a list of vicarages and rectories compiled in 1220 along with a note that the vicarage was ordained 'very long ago'[78]. There was, for a time, a practice such that when a man was ordained his inherited surname was dropped and replaced by his place of birth[79]. As such, Nicholas Wendlingburgh who came as the vicar in 1267 may have been born in the town before returning as a priest.

The architecture of the present church dates from the late twelfth century although only the south doorway remains of the original

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77 Dugdale's *Monasticon*, vol. 2, p.115.

78 Victoria County History - *A History of the County of Northampton*, vol. 2, p.19.

79 Gibbons, A. (1888). *Early Lincoln wills 1280-1547*, p.37, Lincoln: James Williamson.

Norman building. The tower was built in the late thirteenth century. As with many parish churches, further structural changes were made to cater for an expanding population and the building that stands today was largely in place by around 1600[80]. The church was heavily influenced by Crowland Abbey until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the late 1530s. The abbey, for instance, selected and presented the parish priest.

As with all old churches a question arises concerning why the church is located where it is. One possibility is that the first church (pre-Norman), assuming there was one, was somewhere else although not far away, perhaps nearer the main manor site to the south. At Raunds, for instance, a small Saxon church was built in the ninth century but became too small and although it was enlarged it was not used as a church for long[81]. It soon became absorbed into other buildings on the manor and was used for non-religious purposes. The ancient parish church that stands at Raunds today was built several hundred yards away from the original Saxon church. No evidence for a previous site has ever been found at Wellingborough, however, such as skeletons when a burial ground is disturbed. However, there is an undocumented report that graves were disturbed in building work below the old manor hall in the 1970s[82].

Another, and perhaps more likely, possibility is that the present church is built on the site of a much earlier church. The Abbot of Crowland and his representatives in the town must have been involved in deciding where to build it so why not build it nearer to the manor hall as often happened? One reason could be that it was built on the site of a former (pre-Norman) church on ground that was symbolic perhaps because of the people who had been buried there before the abbey owned the manor or in the years that followed. At that time domestic buildings were short-lived and it is perhaps also possible that the site of the original settlement, for which the area around the church is a good candidate, was later used as a cemetery after domestic buildings had migrated a short distance away. There is no evidence for this but in the early 1800s some graves were found near the church seven or eight feet down and one had a stone at the

80 Victoria County History - *A History of the County of Northampton*, vol. 4, pp.135-146.

81 Boddington, R. and Cadman, A. (1996). *Raunds Furnells: The Anglo-Saxon church and churchyard,* English Heritage.

82 WEUS, p. 19.

head and feet, stones on the side and with a stone cover[83]. Some Saxon burials were like that but without any further context it would be a great leap of faith to see the discovery as evidence for a Saxon burial site. But it might be.

Regarding its dedication, All Hallows is an alternative form of All Saints. From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, however, All Hallows was commonly referred to as St Luke's and many of the men who signed-up to serve in the First World War gave their parish as St Luke's in their signing-on papers. Why it was so-called is not known for sure as the church has never been dedicated to St Luke. It is perhaps no coincidence, however, that the right to hold a fair on the feast of St Luke was granted to the Abbot of Crowland in 1446 and a cheese fair was held on St Luke's day perhaps in the area that became Cheese Lane. Other churches around Northampton attracted the St Luke 'dedication' even though they had no connection with the Saint[84].

All Hallows showing the old houses at the top of Pebble Lane

83 Cole, p. 54

84 NN&Q, V, p.178; *The Atheneum*, 9th December 1899, No. 3763, p.806.

Chapels and Gilds

The wealthier residents created chapels and gilds connected to the church. Gilds had a social and charitable purpose and would ensure that people received proper Christian burial and that masses would be said for their souls and other Christian departed. Chapels were often specific places in a church set-aside for specific duties performed by a priest.

A licence for the Chapel of Our Lady was granted in 1392 to William Toppying, Robert Fitz Deiu, William Spencer and John Waldegrave, 'to found a perpetual fraternity and gild of themselves and others willing to be of it in honour of God and St Mary' and to choose each year two wardens to govern it[85]. William Spencer and his wife Emma appear on the 1381 taxation also, like Toppying, paying a relatively large amount. The assets of the gild consisted of a messuage, dovecote, four gardens, sixty-one acres of land, sixteen acres of meadow, seventeen acres of pasture and 10s-1½ d rent to be put to religious uses as they see fit. In 1549, John Monson was granted a close called Gundall's Yard, a little close called St Mary Lane, a messuage in Gyes Lane (which sounds a lot like Cheese Lane) and other lands that formerly belonged to the late gild or fraternity of Wellingborough[86]. The area around Swanspool was once known as St Mary's End possibly because the gild of Our Lady held lands there.

Bequests to benefit chapels and gilds were a common feature of early wills and from wills made in the early 1500s we know of the chapels of Our Lady, Corpus Christi, and St Catherine's. Gilds receiving bequests were the Gild of the Mass of Jesus, The Gild of Corpus Christi and Saint George, the Gild of Our Lady, the Gild of St Catherine, the Gild of the Sepulchre and the Gild of the Rood. Bequests were also made to the high rood, to sepulchre lights and torches, to the worship of the sacrament, mass and song books, repairs to the church particularly windows, for a new organ, an alms house in the churchyard and dole money for the poor[87]. William Clendon gave twelve pence towards the 'byldynge of the church howse' in 1524, Margaret Bythery left it a tablecloth in 1537 and Richard Westmore of London left five shillings 'among the parysshioners to make them merrye in the church house.'

85 Patent Rolls, Richard II, p.175, 177.

86 Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward VI, Vol. III.

87 Serjeantson, R.M. & Longden, H.I. (1913). *The parish churches and religious houses of Northamptonshire. Their dedications, altars, images and lights.* London: Royal Archaeological Institute.

In his will of 1518, William Fysher, a glover, desired to be buried in the Chapel of Saint Mary and gave money to the fraternity of Jesus Mass and Corpus Christi, to the gild of Saint Mary, to the fraternity of Saint Katherine, to the Sepulchre, the bells, the torches, to a priest to sing for his soul and all Christian souls in Saint Katherine's chapel for two years. In his will of 1544, Sir Willyam Ellys, priest, desired to be buried before the altar in the Chapel of Our Lady in Wenlyngburgh. He left money to the Sepulchre, to the high altar, and to the bells amongst other things.

The vicar, churchwardens and principal inhabitants recorded their thanks in the parish register in 1634 for the gift of new communion plate from Sir Paul Pindar who gave the church a pair of silver flagons and a chalice and cover. He had lived in Wellingborough until he was sixteen and may have attended the grammar school. Aged eighteen, he was apprenticed to a merchant trading with Venice where he lived for about fifteen years making a good living from trade. He came to the attention of Turkish traders and became King James' ambassador at Constantinople. He was knighted in 1623 and is said to have lent the king a valuable diamond and to have supported the king financially. He also made money from the extraction of alum. His background is unknown but a sheep farmer called Robert Pyndar lived in the town in 1549 and may have been his grandfather[88]. He died in 1650 aged 84[89].

Parish registers

The parish registers start in 1586 and are largely continuous to the present. They have been well-maintained and are in good condition. There are entries for most years although sometimes there are no entries for a few months. There may have been no vicar from 1642-49[90] following the imprisonment and death of Thomas Jones (see section on the Civil War) but the parish registers are largely complete at this time so services were being conducted.

From 1586 to 1850 about 5,900 marriages and 18,700 christenings were recorded with the average christening to marriage ratio per

88 Sheep Returns of 1549; Howard, J.J. (Ed.) (1883). *The visitation of London A.D.1633-35*, Vol. II, London.

89 'Authentic anecdotes of Sir Paul Pyndar', *The Scots Magazine*, 1787, Vol. 49, pp.441-443.

90 Cole, p.59.

decade being about 3.3. Three reasons help to explain what might seem a low figure given that people often had large families. One, marriages were often short because one partner died and remarriage was very much a practical necessity for widowed fathers and mothers. Two, forgetful clergy not recording all the christenings. Three, the christenings total will be a little under the actual number of births because of infant mortality, non-conformism and an increasing tendency from the eighteenth century not to have children christened.

After the civil wars in the 1640s, changes were made to the ways that parish registers were kept which lasted until the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 when things started to return to normal. In 1653, parishes were required to elect a Register, effectively a person acting as a registrar, to record births (not christenings), marriages and burials. In many parishes this led to a breakdown in recording and even the loss of older parish registers. Wellingborough was fortunate, however, since the registers were maintained thoroughly throughout the 1640s and 1650s. The parish elected Robert Bretone to be the Register in 1653 and until the Restoration of the Monarchy banns of marriages were read and conducted publicly. For the marriage of John Warren and Grace Roberts of Overstone in 1653 he noted that banns were published at 'the Market Crosse' which was outside the front of the Hind. Marriages were mostly conducted by Mr Pentlow, presumably Thomas Pentelow a local Justice of the Peace.

Market crosses still stand in Irthlingborough and Higham Ferrers. They were often large structures such that people could shelter under a roof and do their trade. They had religious and ethical purposes, basically signifying that business should be conducted fairly and decently. They were also sites for proclamations and penance. There is no description of the cross that stood in the seventeenth century but it was replaced by another that stood from 1719 to 1798[91]. According to Cole, this structure had at its base 'a flight of steps, surmounted by a bee-hive shaped rotunda, which served the purposes of a prison within and upon the centre was erected an octangular fluted shaft, with a vane and points'[92].

91 It was possibly taken down in 1807, see *Northampton County Magazine*, p. 316
92 Cole, p. 243.

Churchyard

From 1586 to 1850 about 19,300 burials are recorded in the parish registers and, since the present church dates to the late twelfth century, several thousand must have been buried before 1586. Not all were buried at All Hallows as there were other burial grounds in the town, but most were. The old churchyard was larger than it is now as a section on the north side was lost when Church Street was widened in the 1930s and it also went further down on the south side into what is now the top of the marketplace. Nevertheless, that was a lot of bodies in a small space.

There was concern among the town's worthies in 1737 about the practice of burying at night as this was 'a very inconvenient' custom[93]. A vestry meeting resolved that anyone bringing a body for burial must do so before 7pm between April and September and before 4pm between the end of September and the end of March. Anyone burying later in the day would pay a fine of one shilling per hour or part thereof. The order was to be announced in the town by 'the publick cryer' and half of the fine went to the minister and half to the poor.

By 1849, concern was growing about the overcrowded churchyard and the dissenters' burial grounds on Cheese Lane and Outlaw Lane were also in a poor state. In 1856 the Burial Board advertised for three or four acres of land near the town for use as a burial ground. All burial places in the town were closed after June 1857 and new land called Castle Close was obtained for use as a public cemetery in response to concerns about the unhygienic conditions then pertaining around the church. The new cemetery was consecrated in June 1858 and new land was added in the 1870s.

93 NRO document 350P/453

Conformist and non-conformist chapels in London Road cemetery.

London Road cemetery is also the resting place of John Askham and his first wife Hannah (nee Bonham) who died aged 37. Death featured in Askham's writing and he began his poem, *My resting place* thus,

Where'er I die, O, let my bones be laid,
In the still graveyard of my native home,
Where those who loved me in my life may come,
And sometimes, at the quiet eventide,
Linger awhile my homely grave beside;

John Askham's grave is inscribed, "Whom God blessed with the gift of poesy"

Improvements were made to All Hallows' churchyard in 1863 when graves were levelled and the space sown with grass and shrubs. An old unsightly wall on the south side was replaced with a low stone fence surmounted by ornamental railing and a new path put in place. There is a plan of graves inside the church in an old parish register and some of the memorial inscriptions inside the church were recorded by Bridges in the early eighteenth century and by Cole in the early nineteenth century. Unfortunately, inscriptions in the churchyard do not appear to have been recorded before they were cleared although some gravestones were placed around the edge of the churchyard. Many of these are now illegible but a few survive from the early eighteenth century. Perhaps the oldest memorial outside the church is built into the east wall;

My time was short
Longer will be my rest
God called me home
Because he knew best
Tho. Underwood, Died May ye 20th 1684. Aged 12.

Thomas Underwood's memorial

Another on the east wall reads;

In memory of Thomas Wells who departed this life January 28th 1770 aged 36
Stay, mortal
Stay walk not alone
One moment stay to read my stone
Death did to me short warning give
Therefore be careful how you live
And as you read the end of me
Before for death prepared be

Misericords

One survival from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century are six misericords[94]. These are wooden carvings underneath foldable seats in the church so that when the seat is up, a standing person

94 Hardwick, P. (2011). *English medieval misericords – The margins of meaning,* Boydell Press; NN&Q vol. 6, pp. 33-35; Faleer, R.A. (2009). *Church woodwork in the British Isles 1100-1535*.

can gain some relief by resting on them. One portrays a fox running away with a goose. The fox (Reynard) was popular in medieval folklore and this portrayal is not uncommon. It may simply represent familiar scene on the manor or may have symbolised, for example, the rich taking from the poor. Surely not the lord of the manor taking advantage of servile tenants.

In another, a bare breasted mermaid warns against the sins of temptation. She is holding a comb and a mirror and is flanked on both sides by a fish. The lion was also a regular feature on carvings and one misericord features two lions advancing each followed by a lion cub. They are flanked by a smaller lion on each side. The meaning of lion carvings varied according to how the lion was portrayed. In this case it might just mean strength and kingship. Another carving features an animal, possibly a dog.

Of the two more unusual carvings, one shows a man and a woman, perhaps husband and wife, standing either side of a small table. He is wearing a loosely laced tunic with loose fitting sleeves, hose and boots. His left hand is touching, maybe scratching, his head. The woman who is leaning away from the man wears a cap, dress and apron and is carrying a jug in her right hand. In her left hand is a cup. They are flanked on each side by a rose. They do look a bit inebriated and this carving might warn against the consequences of too much ale.

Carving of man and woman. Copyright 2020 www.misericords.co.uk. Reproduced with permission.

Another misericord shows a wood carver seated with a wooden bench across his legs. He wears a cap and has a broch on his chest. On the bench are some woodworking tools and he appears to be carving a rosette. Behind and either side of him are two eagles facing each other. Either side of them is foliage. This misericord has been interpreted as a leatherworker but that does not seem certain from the carving. Perhaps it is the original woodcarver showing us six hundred years later how the misericords were made.

Bells

As of 1878, there were six bells and a priest's bell[95]. Each carried an inscription. One was the gift of Sir Paul Pinder 1640. One was made by Newcombe of Leicester 1604. One is dated 1629. One is dated 1729. One was from the vicar and churchwardens 1764. The sixth bell carried the sobering inscription; TO CHVRCH THE LIVEINGE I DOE CALL THE DEADE TO GRAVE I SVMMON ALL THOMAS JONES + PAUL DENET SACARYE HOBSONN THOMAS WORLIDGE RICHARD HILLAPS CHVRCHWARD 1639.

Two other bells were added later. The priest's bell was inscribed RICHARD TOMLIN CHVRCHWARDEN HEN PENN MADE ME 1708.

A curfew was rung at 8pm in the autumn and winter and this tradition ceased sometime in the mid 1800s. At one time, a harvest bell was rung at 4am to call labourers to work and on some farms if they arrived for work before the bell stopped ringing they received a pint of beer.

In 1598/9, a surplus from the Feoffees Charity was used to introduce new chimes and the extract below shows what the feoffees (trustees) were thinking.

"Also we appoynte for the new chymes in the Church … so that the same be sett in notes after the best manner of a tune, discretely to be considered upon & amended from the foolish tune now in use - £4 in regard to the same chymes going at the end of foure hours and especially in the night season is by the grace of God, a severall warning for the vyllage to have better regard to the fyres for to avoid casualties, & a tyme to prevent disorderly persons and due tymes to avoid unlawful gaming, stealing & disorders in

95 North, T. (1878). *The church bells of Northamptonshire*.

the night, and a tyme for to know when apprentices shall aryse & goe to their rest indifferently between them & theyre maisters, and other good considerations which we think is for the common benefit of the parishe of Wendlingburghe – and other payments for the repayre & about the church we appoynte the same four pounds."

The memorandum shows that the feoffees had a dim view of the sound made by the bells and that a new chime would create more orderly behaviour in the town.

The interior of All Hallows, pre-1917

CHAPTER 5

OTHER CHURCHES, CHAPELS AND NON-CONFORMISM

Anglican and Catholic churches

New Anglican churches and a Catholic church were built as the town expanded in the late nineteenth century.

All Saints
The foundation stone for this new church in Midland Road was laid on All Saints Day, 1866 by Revd H.V. Broughton, vicar of Wellingborough. A letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* felt that the dedication to All Saints was curious because it was the same as that of the ancient parish church, All Hallows. It points out that popular opinion was that the parish church was dedicated to St Luke although there is no evidence that it ever was.

St Barnabas
To cater for the expanding population on the west side, an iron church was built in 1863 on land between St Barnabas Street and College Street. The first church was demolished and rebuilt in 1893 on a site given by Mr Edmund Roberts of Gayton and built to take 600 people[96]. When it was consecrated the surrounding streets were decorated with streamers. The new church was damaged when a hurricane ripped through the town in March 1895, picked up the bell turret and deposited it on the roof of the adjoining school. This attractive red brick church was destroyed by fire in 1949 and a new church was opened in 1954.

St Mary's
The construction of St Mary's church in Knox Road was largely funded by sisters Henrietta and Gertrude Sharman. Building began in 1908 to cater for the expanding and mostly working-class population on the east side of the town. The nave was completed in 1930 and while its external appearance seems routine the church has a remarkable interior full of light and colour. It was designed by Sir Ninian Comper, one of Britain's greatest church architects, and is notable also for being one of few Grade I listed buildings built in the twentieth century.

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96 *Northampton Mercury*, 13th October 1893.

St Mary's church in construction

St Mary's church, interior

Catholic church
The growth of the Catholic Church at Wellingborough was influenced by Robert and Sophia Arkwright of Knuston. Mass was held for the first time in hundreds of years in 1868 in 'a room belonging to where is now the Post Office' that had been fitted out for Catholic services. The first Sunday mass in 1871 was in a room at 12 Church Street. In 1873 two plots of land were purchased in the fast-growing east side of the town on what are now Palk Rd and Ranelagh Rd. Father Bernard Murray came to the parish and 139 townspeople were Catholic in 1881. More land was purchased for £200 in 1881. In 1884 an iron church (54' by 24') seating 250 people was built on the site of the future Catholic school. Drawings for a new stone church were made and the final plan was accepted in 1885 at a cost of £4,881 plus fees of £400 and a new church was opened on 2nd September 1886. A presbytery was built in 1894. The old iron chapel was condemned and had to be pulled down in 1895 but a new school was erected on the same site[97].

Non-conformism

There is a long tradition of non-conformism in Wellingborough and a religious census of 1674 identified 2,520 conformists, 193 non-conformists and two Papists. Non-conformists at first risked deprivation and abuse but as non-conformity gradually became more acceptable, chapels were built in Cheese Lane, West Street and Salem Lane. Wesleyan Chapels went up in Alma Street and Gt Park Street and the Friends Meeting House was built in St John Street.

A religious census of 1851 shows how many people were attending the different places of worship[98]. Some of the chapels had large congregations relative to the numbers attending All Hallows.

- Church Street Wesleyan Methodists – a separate building used for worship. General congregation 200. Sunday scholars 75.
- Salem Chapel – Protestant dissenters commonly called Independent. General congregation 249, Sunday school 135.
- Cheese Lane chapel – Independent, general congregation 160, Sunday school 110, evenings 180.
- High Street chapel – Particular Baptists. A large upper room of an unoccupied warehouse used until 'some other place can be

97 Smith, P. '*A Short History of the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Wellingborough 1869-1913*'.
98 Ward, G.S. (2007). *The 1851 Religious Census of Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Record Society.

procured'; average attendance 140.

- Society of Friends – General congregation 20, afternoon, 12.
- Baptist Chapel, Herriott's Lane – Built 1808. General Congregation 80, afternoon and evening, 100.
- West End chapel – general congregation 128, Sunday scholars 61, afternoon 135, evening 90.

The Latter-Day Saints used a private house at Broad Green with a total congregation of eighteen. Peter Sheffield, a High Priest of the Latter-Day Saints, lived on Broad Green in 1844 and went to America soon after.

The Society of Friends (Quakers)

When George Fox, the founder of the Religious Society of Friends, visited the town in 1655 he wrote in his journal[99].

"*At Wellingborough in Northamptonshire I had a great meeting in which the Lord's everlasting power and truth was over all; and many in that country were turned to the Lord. Great rage was among the professors, for the wicked priests, Presbyterians and Independents falsely reported, 'That we carried bottles about with us which we gave people to drink of, which made them follow us; but the Power, Spirit and Truth of God kept friends over the rage of the people. Great spoiling there was also of friends' goods, for tithes by the Independent, Presbyterian and some Baptist Priests who had got into the steeple-houses*".

What Fox refers to here is the widespread tendency for authorities, including clergy, to take advantage of a Quaker's goods and possessions while they were detained or imprisoned.

Quakers are first mentioned in the All Hallows parish register in 1655 and the early Quakers in the town included Robert Cox, Francis Stanley, William Page, Francis Grandbury, William Richardson, Ephraim Pattison and Francis Ellington. After first meeting in private houses they probably used a new meeting house built in Finedon in 1690. By 1751 Quaker meetings were held in a room 'above an ancient archway' in St John Street. The present meeting house was opened in 1819 on part of the burial ground that lay behind the archway which was taken down in 1937 when the road was widened[100].

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99 *'A Journal or Historical Account of the Life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Experiences and Labour of Love in the Work of the Ministry of that Ancient, Eminent and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox'*, 1765.

100 Burton, N. (2016). *Friends Meeting House, Wellingborough, Historic Building Record.* Doi.org 10.5284/1039881

Quakers buried their dead in their own burying grounds as was sometimes recorded in the parish registers. In 1657 William Wallis was laid to rest 'in ye Orchard'. Anne Ellington was buried in 'Vincents orchard' in 1659. William Vincent was incarcerated in Northampton gaol by the vicar because of his refusal to pay a tithe of fourpence and it was presumably his orchard[101]. A son of William Page, Quaker, was buried 'in his closse' which presumably means on Page's own lands. From the mid 1700s some burials were taking place 'in the burying ground', 'in Mr Grant's burying ground' or 'at the Quakers' ground' which was near the Castle. There never was a castle at Wellingborough but the Castle is an area at the bottom of Sheep St with the name giving rise to Castle Lane and Castle Street.

Francis Ellington mentioned above had been a churchwarden at All Hallows in 1643 and had lent money to parliament in the same year. He had four children baptised in the parish church, the first in 1638. In 1655 he published a small booklet entitled "*A true Discovery of the ground of the Imprisonment of Francis Ellington, Thomas Cocket and Edward Ferman & c*". It tells of the struggles facing Quakers who wanted to worship outside the established church. In summary it goes like this.

I, Francis Ellington, living at Wellingborough went to hear a man (Richard Dewsbury of Yorkshire) speak at a friend's house in Harborough, Leicestershire. Moved by his words, Francis invited Dewsbury to his house in December 1654. The next day the constable of Wellingborough Richard Denit went to his house with a warrant from Thomas Pentelow a Justice to apprehend the visitor.

Francis asked the Constable to read the warrant and found it contained no name but 'Quaker' - as such he argued that he could not arrest anyone since no-one was named. The Constable said that it was Dewsbury that he wanted and took him to the Justice's house in Wilby. Francis followed to Wilby and continued to question the arrest and asked for justice for himself. Who do you seek justice against, they asked? Briget Makernes of Finedon he said who two weeks earlier when he and friends had passed through there 'did abuse us throwing water at us and stones and dirt and calling us rogues, witches and Divels. Yet we gave her no cause nor spoke to her' and for this abuse we ask for justice. Pentelow said that she had done the right thing and that he would not act against her and also said that he would take out a warrant to arrest Francis and his friends to appear at the next Northampton sessions.

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101 'The Baptists and quakers in Northamptonshire', *Northampton Mercury*, 28th October 1882, p.2

He appeared at the sessions in January 1655 to hear his friends' trial but was also put in prison until the next sessions in April. There he enquired what law he had transgressed but the justices could not say yet they consigned him to gaol among murderers and felons and separated him from his wife, his five children and his trade. Francis died in Wellingborough in 1672.

In 1655, John Huchin was taken for standing silently in the steeple-house (the church) but less than halfway into his sermon the vicar commanded the churchwarden, Henry Hensman, to remove him. He was taken to an inn where he was told that if he promised not to go to the church in the afternoon he would be released. Even though he did not make such a promise he was released but a constable took him away without a warrant from his master's shop where he was working[102]. Elizabeth Hunt and Mary Botham were fined and imprisoned in 1659 for speaking to people in the steeple-house before the preacher arrived and for disturbing people at their worship.

The Friends' Meeting House in Finedon. When built in 1690 it was the furthest building away from the parish church.

102 Sewel, W. (1795). *The history of the rise, increase and progress of the Christian people called Quakers*, 3rd edition, Volume 1, p. 223, London: James Philips.

William Desborough was also taken and we know a little about the events[103]. A minister met him in the town and told him to stop deceiving the people before God's judgement fell upon him. William asked how he deceived the people and the minister replied that he taught that there was no original sin. William followed the minister to church and stood with his hat on while the minister prayed and preached waiting for the chance to speak at the end of the sermon. The minister stepped down from the pulpit and walked out but William began to say that ministers were hirelings who only worked for gain from the people. Thereupon he was removed first to the magistrate and then to prison among the murderers and cut-throats where he lay for nearly seven months. At the assizes the judge said,

Common fame is indeed a good accuser, but not therefore a good proof. And thus far I am satisfied as to those things I have heard of thee, but yet because thou art brought out upon a Common Report that you are a dangerous People, and the disturbers of the public peace, I'll send thee back to prison unless thou wilt give in bail that thou wilt demean thyself well and appear next Assizes.

Desborough said that he thought that was unreasonable and he was sent back to prison. At the next Assizes before a different judge and in front of no accuser the judge acquitted him of the charge but nevertheless ordered him back to prison until another Assize.

One other person we know of is Mary the wife of William Page because what she said on her deathbed in Warwick where she had been a prisoner in 1665 was recorded[104]. After a lengthy religious dedication, a Friend asked her how she felt and she replied, "I am weak but I would go home". The Friend asked if she meant her Eternal home and Mary said "yes, when it pleaseth my Heavenly Father." Her husband was there and moved close to her, 'she in much love stroked him on the face with her hand when tears trickled down his cheeks'. She said, "give me up freely into the arms of my Heavenly Father" and spoke no more.

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103 Croese, G. (1696). *The general history of the Quakers containing the lives, tenents, sufferings, tryals, speeches and letters of all the most eminent Quakers both men and women*, p. 105, London: J. Dunton.

104 *Relation in part of what passed through a true and faithful servant and handmaid of the Lord, Mary Page, when she lay upon her bed of sickness*. Early English Books Online

Thomas Ollive

Thomas Ollive was also influenced by Dewsbury and he was arrested in 1657 for Sabbath breaking (doing business on Sundays). Informers tipped-off the authorities about Quaker meetings and in 1666 he was arrested at a religious meeting in the house of John Mackerness in Finedon along with William Page, Robert Cox, John Nottingham, Thomas Page, William Mather, Elizabeth Ellington, Judith Ollive, Alice Ives and Alice Harris all of Wellingborough[105]. They were taken in a cart to appear before the Justices and all were fined forty shillings. For non-payment they were sent to Northampton gaol for six weeks. Like many imprisoned Quakers, Thomas wrote a pamphlet justifying his beliefs entitled, *A signification from Israel's God to England's rulers and inhabitants*. He suffered again in 1674 and as a haberdasher his cloth was taken from him.

Thomas Ollive is named in the churchwardens' accounts book as an overseer of the poor from May to December 1674. Clearly a man of some independence and disillusioned with life in England he sailed in the second ship, *Kent*, bound for the new colony in New Jersey in 1677 along with other English Quaker families. They arrived at Rancocas Creek, purchased land from native Indians and settled there. Thomas clearly had some affection for Wellingborough since he named his lands after it and so created the American settlement of the same name (now the town of Willingboro). He built a flour mill, became a Justice, Speaker of the Colonial Assembly and Governor of the province in 1684.

New Jersey records suggest that he married Judith Woolston who died in 1688[106]. Thomas died in 1692 and was buried in the Quaker burying ground in his new hometown. Through his will he left his real and personal estate to his wife Mary the daughter of Daniel Wills and he left legacies to Ann the wife of Samuel Jennings, his sister Sarah Gurney and sister Martha and his brother Benjamin of London among others[107]. Thomas was one of at least fourteen children of Thomas Ollife, yeoman, of Bierton in Buckinghamshire. His mother was Ann Hopkins alias Janes. Baptised in 1637, when and why he left Bierton for Wellingborough are unknown but he was here by the time he was about twenty-one which suggests that

105 Besse, J. (1753). *A collection of the sufferings of the people called Quakers*.

106 James Olive Family, Wake County, Issue 3.

107 *Calendar of New Jersey Wills*, Vol. 1.

he might have served his apprenticeship here or came here when he had finished it. There is a little mystery about Judith Ollive who was arrested with him in 1666 and who travelled with him to America. If she was his wife, then no record of their marriage or of a Judith Woolston have been found. If she was his sister, then there is no baptism alongside those of his many siblings. When she was buried in New Jersey she was not described as the wife of Thomas. If she had been, normally such a relationship was given.

Back in Northamptonshire, Quakers continued their struggle and suffering until the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689 which gave greater religious freedom to a range of nonconformist groups.

Chapels

Around the time that the Quaker movement was growing, the Reverend Andrew Perne rector of Wilby who died in 1654 was probably influencing protestant non-conformism at Wellingborough. Others included Mr Vincent Alsop who succeeded Perne at Wilby and who was ejected from there in 1662, a Mr Rowlet and Henry Wills formerly rector of Loddington[108]. In 1672, Mr Alsop, a Congregationalist, applied to preach in a room over the schoolhouse. This was refused and he was only allowed to preach in his own house at Geddington. Oddly, Strickland Negus of Geddington wanted to preach there but was only allowed to do so at Richard Barnes' house at Wellingborough[109].

John King is the first recorded preacher in 1692 at chapels in Silver St or Crown Yard. In those early days there were divisions among the dissenters at Wellingborough and this explains why the chapels in Cheese Lane and West End evolved separately. John King, it seems, disagreed over theology with Richard Davis who was running the 'mother' church at Rothwell. It looks as if West End remained loyal to Rothwell whereas Cheese Lane had differences of opinion[110]. The

108 Coleman, T. (1853). *Memorials of the independent churches in Northamptonshire*.
109 Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1635-6; CSP Domestic: Charles II, 1671-2; Turner, G.L. (1914). *Original records of early non-conformity under persecution and indulgence*. Vols II and III, Fisher Unwin.
110 Nuttall, G. (1965). Northamptonshire and the Modern Question: A Turning Point in Eighteenth Century Dissent, *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, 16(1), 101-123.

early Independent church at Wellingborough was part of a network of dissenting churches in Northants, Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire[111].

West End Independent

Cole (1837) tells us that originally there was a chapel in Commercial Lane which was a road off Sheep Street now totally redeveloped. The chapel was built to cater for the large numbers of dissenters (45 sisters and 27 brethren) who were travelling from Wellingborough to Rothwell where there had been a well-established Independent church since the 1650s. Cole names the people involved in this decision as Robert Bettson, William Houstman, John Wells, Samuel Conquest, Samuel Baysley, John Robinson, Thomas Seedwright, John Fox, Samuel Dunkely, William Hall, William Smith, Thomas Barker and William Ramsbottam all of Wellingborough.

In 1691 Brother Bettson who was an elder of the church at Rothwell was approved to look after the flock at Wellingborough[112]. This created a separate and new church which originally met in Crown Yard. Bettson remained the minister for thirty-three years. William Grant then came from Rothwell in 1723 and was so popular the meeting house was enlarged in 1726. He was minister for forty-seven years and preached his last sermon in 1770 a year before he died. John Carver was next and was followed by Mr Bell who did not live up to his promise. Mr Renals came in 1804 and served for forty-three years after which he was replaced by Cornelius Curtis Tyte.

A Thomas Ryley Perry wrote a long letter accusing the Reverend Renals, Pastor of the Independent Calvinist Chapel, of preaching about matters that should not concern him[113]. Thomas King, a shoemaker of the town, is mentioned in the letter in the context of being a meddlesome busybody in the service of Renals. A new chapel was built in West Street in 1734. It was rebuilt on the same site in 1791 and was transferred to the Primitive Methodists in 1868.

Some of the burials in the registers of All Hallows mention a burial in 'Mr Grant's ground' and this refers to the minister, William Grant. The chapel's burying ground was at the bottom of a lane leading east from Broad Green and was used for Protestant dissenters from 1717. After the burial ground was closed, remains were removed to

111 Tibbutt, H.G. (1966). New light on Northamptonshire nonconformist history, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, Vol. 4 No.1, pp.61-64.

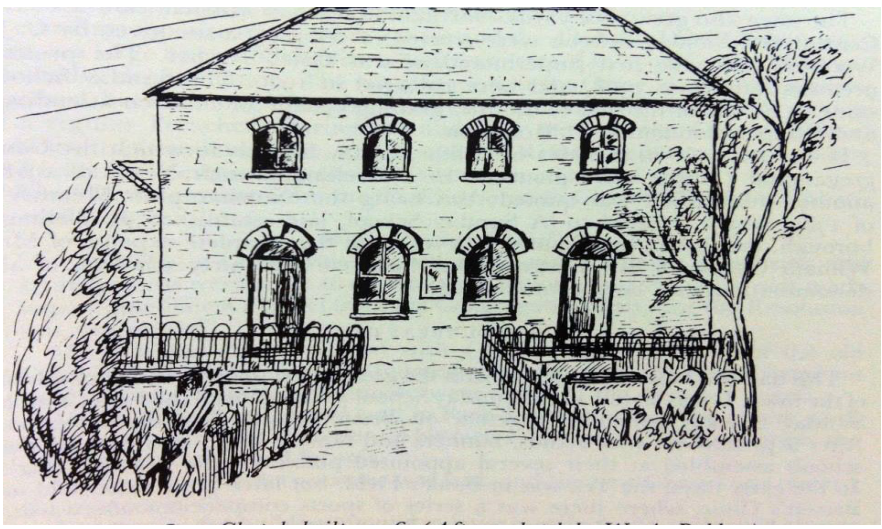
112 Coleman (1853).

113 *The Lion*, Vol. II, 1828.

London Road cemetery in 1883. The lane is now called Outlaw Lane named after Andrew Outlaw, a surgeon who died in 1853.

Cheese Lane Independent Chapel

Cheese Lane ran south from Market Street, about opposite Pebble Lane, but was demolished to make way for a shopping centre. A chapel measuring about fifty feet by forty feet was built there in 1746 and a burial ground was attached to the chapel. It ceased to be a place of worship in 1903 and gravestones may have been removed to Salem Lane. A register of baptisms exists from 1784 and burials from 1792. The burial ground attached to the chapel was cleared and the remains transferred to London Road cemetery in 1902 where there is a memorial giving the names of those who were buried there. The memorial inscriptions that were then present in the chapel were recorded in Cole's history of Wellingborough[114].



Salem Lane Independent

This chapel was opened in 1812 in what was then called Wychurch Lane. It was built by a splinter group from Cheese Lane who objected to the introduction of a new organ. The land was purchased from Mary Robinson, widow, for £50. Prime movers were Adam Corrie and Thomas Peck. John Cole says that the interior contained a memorial to Thomas Peck, surgeon, although this now appears to be outside.

114 See also, Stevens, T. (1892). *'Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Congregationalism in Wellingborough'*.

Like other religious houses, the Cheese Lane and Salem chapels had a substantial social influence. In 1867, for instance, about two hundred children of the Cheese Lane Sunday School held their annual tea festival. Children assembled at the school and in procession behind the Temperance Band headed to the old railway station and took a train to Castle Ashby where they were served tea in a meadow. After tea there were sports until evening. The Salem Sunday School gathered about five hundred children who processed behind a brass band to the market square where tea was served. The lads were dressed in blue caps and tunics edged with red braid with a white enamel belt around the waist.

Congregational church

Some decades later, the Cheese Lane and Salem Lane congregations reconciled their differences about their organs and reunited to build a new United Reform church on the High Street. About two acres of land containing a yard, stables, barns, orchard and gardens were purchased in 1873 for £3,700. Known locally as 'the Congo' in earlier times and sometimes as the 'pork pie church', it is a remarkable round church built in 1875 between Salem Lane and the new Queen Street. The works were carried out by John Boddington from the designs of Caleb Archer and Edward Sharman, architect. Building costs were about £8,500 excluding the land[115].

Wesleyan Methodist

A Wesleyan chapel was built in Church Street in 1791 although this may have been a private house used for meetings[116]. Sometime later, a small chapel was built in Herriott's Lane that also served as a school but was only one room. A new chapel site was needed around 1870 and this was built in Park Road.

When John Wesley passed through Wellingborough the only Methodist around was Brother Angrave of Irchester whom he visited for tea and prayer. In 1786, Martha Tomkins, a Methodist, came to Wellingborough from Northampton to trade as a dressmaker. She fell from her horse in Sheep Street and broke her arm outside the house of Dr Dermott. Unable to look after herself, she stayed with the good doctor and his wife until she had recovered. About 1787

115 'Wellingborough New Congregational Church', *British Architect*, Vol. 4, No. 3, p.355.

116 *Northampton Mercury*, 30th March 1878, page 7. See also Cole.

she obtained a house at the corner of Park Road and Gt Park Street and the house was licensed for worship. Martha so impressed the doctor that he accepted Methodism and toured the country to spread the Word. A Wellingborough circuit was formed in 1816 and in 1872 the Park Street chapel was built it seems on or near the site first licensed[117]. Methodist chapels were built later in Alma Street and Gt Park Street.

Baptists

William Baw left a sum of money in 1721 to support a Baptist preacher. A Calvinist Baptist chapel (Zoar chapel in Zoar Yard) was built in 1808 but is presumed demolished. Early movers in that chapel were David Dulley, brewer, Joseph Mee, Jonathan Dickings, Joseph Peck, Samuel Clayson, James Colson, Thomas Laurence, Ben Alderman, Humphrey Stratton, Samuel Berrill, Mr S. Byfield of Little Harrowden, John Blunt and William Smith[118]. It was once said of David Dulley that he was Wellingborough by birth, a brewer by trade, a dissenter by inheritance and a Liberal Unionist by conviction and that both he and his beer were extremely popular in East Northamptonshire[119].

A small burial ground was attached to Zoar chapel which fell out of use in 1863 and was replaced by the new and much larger chapel in Park Road built by Mr Thomas Slinn. The Baptist chapel in Park Street was opened in 1863 to a large congregation. It was designed by Mr. D. Dulley and erected (presumably funded) by Mr W. Dulley. A Particular Baptist Chapel was built in Knox Road in 1874 and a Baptist chapel in Mill Road was built in 1905.

Salvation Army

The Christian Mission, which later became the Salvation Army, first had a presence in the town when Francis and Elizabeth Ireson established a centre in 1872. The first centre was in a tent pitched on waste land. Later the Corps occupied a building at the corner of Ranelagh Road and Midland Road which subsequently became a skating rink. There was a movement led by Mrs Booth

117 'Early Methodism in Huntingdonshire and its Immediate Vicinity', *Wesley-an-Methodist Magazine*, Oct. 1881; *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, June 1828, pp.363-373 on Dr Dermott.

118 Palmer & Palmer, 1972.

119 *Northampton Mercury*, 1st February 1895, p.3

of London in 1873 to build a new mission hall 'of a commodious and undenominational' nature and she was 'indefatigable in her exertions on its behalf.' It was needed because 'it is well known that many of the lower class do not attend any place of worship.' To raise support for the project, Mrs Booth preached a powerful sermon in Salem Chapel in 'a clear and womanly voice'[120].

This mission was successful and culminated in the Citadel in St John Street which is dated 1874. A large crowd assembled to witness the laying of a foundation stone at the new Christian Mission Hall in what was described as a poor neighbourhood. The Revd W. Booth said that the preachers did not care where they met, sometimes in an attic, a theatre, a dance room or in a cellar with the rats, so long as they might win souls to Christ. Booth said that the mission in Wellingborough had first met at the town pump. Mrs Sears and Mr Robert Sears had donated the land for the hall. The preacher at the time was the Revd J. Clare ('The Happy Shoemaker') and the building costs were to be £600[121].

In the early 1920s plans were underway to raise funding to build a large hall at the corner of Mill Road and Victoria Road. Commissioner Thomas Coombs who was attached to Wellingborough was one of the Army's most successful officers with responsibility for overseeing the Army's work in Canada and Australia in the late nineteenth century.

120 *Northampton Mercury*, 6th September 1873, p.7

121 *Northampton Mercury*, 19th September 1874, p.3

CHAPTER 6

LIFE THROUGH OLD WILLS

One way of appreciating life in time past is through the wills that people made, often very shortly before they died. Most people did not leave a will, however, largely because they had no property and little if anything to leave. As such, old wills mostly, but not always, relate to people who had a bit more than most. They reveal all sorts of insights into the priorities that people had and what they wanted for the families that they were leaving behind.

Sixteenth century

The earliest wills of people living in Wellingborough date from the early sixteenth century and usually begin with various religious dedications and bequests[122]. Dame Joan Bradley, widow of Thomas Bradley formerly mayor of London, wrote a long will in 1529 in which a lot of people were each given a black gown. In addition, she willed that her executors pay three pounds for a priest to say a funeral service in the 'churche of Wellingborowe' and for alms to be given for her soul and the souls of her husband, father and mother. Presumably one or more of them came from Wellingborough.

John Ball's will made in September 1539 was proved a month later. He wanted to be buried in Our Lady Chapel and in keeping with tradition he left a few pence to the mother church at Lincoln, to the high alter for tithes forgotten, to the fraternities of Our Lady, Corpus Christi and Saint Katherine, to the repair of the torches, the sepulchre light, the mass of Jesus, to the repair of the bells. He gave bread to the poor and money for masses to be said for his soul and all other Christian souls. After all this he gave his son one hundred pounds and John Dennett and Thomas Gybbes were to look after the money until his son was twenty-two. If his son died then the money would go to his nephews and his wife. He bequeathed to his mother which means that he was not very old and all the rest of his money and goods he gave to his wife Margaret.

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122 The will of Thomas Gladman, 1443, bequeaths his tenements in Wellingborough.

William Ellys, priest, made his last will in May 1544. He commended his soul to Almighty God and unto our Blessed Lady and unto all the holy company of heaven. He willed that his body should be buried in the chapel of Our Lady at Wenlynburgh before the alter. For his burial there he gave twenty shillings and eight pence to the mother church of Peterborough. To the high alter twelve pence and to the high choir one green vestment and one mass book, one hymnall and one 'processionary'. He gave three shillings and four pence to the Bell, to the repair of 'Stables brig' (Staples bridge), and to the 'mending of highe wayes'. To Master Parker curate my best tippet (a long scarf or shawl), to John Amerton my short gown, a 'saye jakett', one buckskin dublett (a jacket) and my best hose. To Joan Dennet daughter of John Dennet my best featherbed, to Thomas Crosborrow son of Richard Crosborow my best brass pot, to Johan Bollton one bedstead, a mattress, one pair of sheets, a pair of blankets and a red covering. The rest of my goods not bequeathed I put into the administration of John Denet and Richard Crosborow of Wenlyngborough and of John Amerton of Chester in the parish of Archester my executors to bring my body honestly to the ground and to find a priest to sing for my soul and all other Christian souls. John Denet and Richard Crosborow are to have six shillings and eight pence each for their labours and I make John Harbrom parson of Newton to be supervisor of my will and he is to have three shillings and four pence for his labour. Witnesses, Mayster Parker curate, John Peecke bailiff, Robert Pynder, John Pratt with others. Sir William's will was proved three months after it was written. Chester in the parish of Archester was the deserted medieval village of Chester-on-the-Water which was over the river near Chester House.

In 1554, Ralph Curson of Wyllingborue was given permission to sell wines within his dwelling house to be drunk both within and without his doors. Twenty years later in 1574, the will of Rafe Curson, gentleman, made no religious bequests simply desiring to be buried in the church or churchyard. To his wife Elizabeth he gave his house called 'bell' together with two tenements with an orchard and a little close in Buckwell End and other lands for the term of her life. All other lands and tenements he gave to his son Robert. He left his wife's daughter five pounds (presumably his stepdaughter), his servant forty shillings, his 'kynswoman' forty shillings. The rest of his goods chattels were divided between his wife and son.

In 1557, Henry Clendon after the usual religious dedications desired to be buried in the Chapel of Our Lady. He gave four pence to the mother church at Peterborough and two shillings to Wellingborough church for tithes forgotten. He gave to the repair of the bells and gave three pounds to the poor people on the day of his burial. To William his son he gave 'my house that I now dwell in…and my shoppe in the market place'. And for that William 'shall bring up my two daughters Annes and Elisabeth with meate and drincke clothe bothe lynnen and wollen and all thinges necessarie until the daye of their mariages'. In return, the daughters were instructed to 'doo him honest and trewe service in keeping and ordering of his house in the meane tyme'. He gave Elisabeth twenty pounds, his sons George and Thomas twenty-six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence and two silver spoons each to George, Thomas, Agnes and Elizabeth. Agnes also got two angel nobles to buy her a pot and pan (a noble was a third of a pound). To his godchildren that were alive when he died he gave four pence. The rest of his estate went to his son William. Robert Wotton parson of Hardwick was to supervise his will and the witnesses were John Tew vicar of Hardwick, John Vincent alderman and Henry Harriatt. Henry's will was proved two months after it was written.

In 1579, John Hackney, yeoman, left a complicated will. He wanted to be buried in the church or churchyard and gave ten shillings 'towardes the defacinge of the images in the windowes there'. To the paving of the 'market steed' he gave forty shillings, five shillings to the poor of Wilby and twenty shillings to the poor of Wellingborough. To his godchildren 'of myne owne kynne' one ewe sheep each and to all other godchildren twelve pence. To his wife Margaret he gave all the lands and tenements in Wilby that were his when they were married together with the house 'wherein I nowe dwell' with the yard, orchard and garden for her natural life. He willed that his wife should allow his son Robert to live with her 'findinge her meate drink and all other necessaries'. But if they cannot 'accorde well together' then she shall have the hall, parlour, buttery with the rooms over them and the dovehouse and Robert was to pay her forty shillings a year. Here we see John Hackney planning for his family after his death.

John also left Margaret half of his household 'stuff', twenty pounds and one of his best cows that was to be kept well winter and summer by Robert for his wife's use only. To Thomas my son all my lands

and tenements in 'golde streete' and my house in Wilby that Symon Martin now lives in. To Thomas the house in Wellingborough that Thomas Reve lives in with its orchard and gardens. To Thomas all my bees and beehives in 'gold streete'. To John Wyatt my son in law his debts that he owes me or my wife, one cow or heffer, twenty ewes 'not of the best, nor of the worst', and two beehives in my orchard at Wilby. To my son-in-law William Mabbott one cow or heifer and twenty ewes. To William for the lifetime of my daughter Ales (his wife) the shop that Willyam Baggarley now holds from me. To my son Edward half of all my wares in my shop chamber or warehouse and one cow or heffer. The will contains a lot of detail about how the sheep should be selected so that the good and bad ones were shared amongst his sons. As a yeoman, John Hackney owned and farmed land and was relatively well-off.

In 1591, Robert Coventon, husbandman, also desired to be buried in the churchyard. To his sons John and Thomas he left three of his horses and carts 'shod with yron' which means they had an iron band around the cartwheels. To his sons Robert, William, Richard, George and Henry he gave four pounds each when they reached twenty-one. To his daughters Agnes, Sibill, Alice and Dorothie he also gave four pounds each. Everything else he left to his wife, Alice. A husbandman had property and land of his own and his social status was above that of a tradesman but below that of a yeoman.

Seventeenth century

Basil Parker, innholder, made a will in June 1613 in which he bequeathed his soul to the Almighty trusting to be saved by the merits of Christ Jesus his saviour and his body to be buried in the churchyard of Wendlingburgh. He gave to his sister Elizabeth Orynwood ten shillings within a year of his death. To Katherne Pettit his kinswoman one warming pan and five shillings. After paying his debts and funeral expenses he gave all the rest to Mary his wife and John Parker his son who were his executors. He gave to John Lingard the overseer of his will two shillings. Witnesses to his mark were Richard Bletsoe, John Cockell, Christopher Tomson. His will was proved ten years later in October 1623 so he made provision for his wife and son well in advance. Basil had two children who died in 1610 and 1611 and his wife Elizabeth died in 1615. He remarried Mary Mann in 1620.

John Custance, husband man, made a will in 1622 saying that he was sick in body but whole in mind. He gave to Elizabeth his daughter the house in which he dwelt when she is twenty-one together with the land belonging to it provided that his wife shall have, hold and occupy and enjoy the house and land until Elizabeth is twenty-one. He gave to Lewes his son the house that his mother Bridget Cley dwelt in with the land belonging to it after her death. He gave to his sisters Ales, Elizabeth and Bridgett twenty pounds to be divided equally between them to be paid at the day of their marriages. He gave to Lewes his brother the choice of his best horse. He gave to the poor of Wellingborough three shillings and four pence and after his debts and funeral expenses were paid he gave all the rest of his goods to Susan his wife. Henry Asbytall and Thomas Darlinge were supervisors of his will which was witnessed by John Bamford, Ed: Dingles and O. Thomson and proved on the 4th January 1623.

John Custance was born in 1589, the son of Thomas who was also a husbandman, so he was about thirty-three when he died. He appears to have married Ales Lee in 1612 but presumably she died and he remarried Susan. He had two houses which he left to his infant children since his daughter Elizabeth was born in 1620 and his son Lewis was born only a few months before the will was made. His widowed mother married Lewis Cley in 1608.

Richard Rawlins, a labourer, made a will in May 1626 that was proved in July. Stating that he was sick in body but of perfect memory he bequeathed his soul to Almighty God and his body to be buried at the discretion of his executrix. To his eldest son William he gave twenty shillings to be paid one year after his death. To the same William he gave his best chest save one. To his second son Thomas he gave twenty shillings to be paid one year after his death and the best coffer which was his mother's. To Anne his daughter he gave his best chest and the best chest that came by his current wife ('my wife that now is'). He gave her his best bottle, two of the best chattels and twelve pence. He gave his sister Elyzabeth Hudson twelve pence. All the rest of his goods and chattels he gave to Annis his loving wife whom he made his executrix. The overseers were Thomas Jones and Jefferi Fisher of Wellingburre yeoman to whom he gave twelve pence each for their pains. He made his mark in the presence of John Clendon and Richard Harrison.

We can see from his will that Richard could not write. He had perhaps only been married for eleven years since Richard Rawlins married Alce Peart at All Hallows in 1615 but Alce died in 1623 and he seems to have remarried. He asked two men of good standing to oversee his will, Thomas Jones was probably the vicar who was often asked to oversee the will of a townsman.

In 1628, Thomas Hackney, yeoman, made a will before he set sail in 'the good shipper vessel called the discovery' to trade in the East Indies. He left three pounds fifteen shillings to his mother Anne and the same to his loving brothers John, Robert and Henry and to his two sisters Ellin and Elizabeth. To his loving brother Edward he left 'one groate of silver'. All the rest he gave to the two executors of his will. If his possessions at the time of his death did not cover his legacies then they were to be void and his wealth was to be equally divided among the legatees except for Edward who kept his groat. His will was proved three years later.

In 1637 William Flaunders, a wittawer, sick in body but of perfect memory bequeathed his soul to Almighty God and Jesus Christ and his body to be buried at the discretion of his executors. His will continued, I give to Hellen my now wife my bed and bedding in my chamber and my other bed and beddings and all my other goods and household stuff and one ewe and lamb and two hoggarills. Also to my wife I give all my goods and household stuff about my dwelling house except my wares and tools belonging to my trade. I leave my wares and tools to my son Robert and also to him the lease on my dwelling house and close upon condition that Robert shall permit and suffer my said wife Hellen to have and enjoy for her life my copyhold house and meadow and all my land and ground in Spaldwicke, Hunts. If he refuses to do this then the legacy to him shall revert to my wife Hellen. He gave to his three grandchildren each a ewe and a lamb and to his son Robert and his wife two hoggarills. He appointed his loving wife Hellen to be the sole executrix. Witnesses were Arthur Bucke, Thomas Fardell and John Freeman.

A whittawer made a soft, white leather. It was quite common for a man to request that his widow be allowed to live in a house that he had left to their son for so long she stayed a widow. His phrase 'my now wife' suggests that he had been married before. Bequeathing livestock was also very common.

On October 6th 1638, William Greene, carpenter, made a will saying, I commend my soul to Almighty God the father my maker and to Jesus Christ his only son my saviour and redeemer and my body to be buried at the discretion of my executors. I will that my father's will be performed. I give to my mother-in-law all the goods and household in my buttery and two small platters one with a notch in it to my mother Joane. I will that my mother Joane shall have the five marks given to her by my father's will and also thirteen shillings four pence to Joane my mother-in-law. Also I give her the fruits and profits of my house and orchard wherein I now dwell for three years in lieu of all moneys for building of her a house by my later father's will. I give to her one dry barrel. I give to my sister Jane a barrel locked with brass and pewter in it and my best hilling or coverlet, two petticoat shirts also two coffers and my best chair. I give to Thomas Franklyn my cousin my best suit namely a doublet and breeches and to my uncle Franclin his father my old coat. All the rest of my goods and chattels I give to my brother Thomas Greene and my declaration is that whereas my father did give by his will to Jane my sister ten pounds I have appointed William Lynnell to whom I sold my land that he shall pay her the said ten pounds. I make my uncle Thomas Greene of Husbands Bosworth executor and my overseers are John Bawe and William Page senior to whom I give twelve pence each. Witnesses William Page, John Bawe, Willm Lynell, George Robinson, John Freman. William was buried on the 13th October just seven days after making his will. He could not have been very old since his mother and mother-in-law were still alive.

John Crane 'being weake of bodie' gave his house, barn and other buildings to his son William provided that his wife Marie shall live out her life in it and all his four daughters to live in it for so long as they remain unmarried and no longer. If William died without heirs then the house would return to the four sisters for ever and he could only occupy the house after his mother's death. He gave twelve pence each to his sons John and Edward 'in case they bee not dead and ever returne hither again'. He gave to each of his daughters Marie, Elizabeth, Sarah and Alice four pounds each and a chair each to be chosen according to their age 'out of seaven that I have, Marie choosinge one first and the rest in order'. William was given the other three chairs. He gave his wife Marie his sheep, ewes and household goods. The will was witnessed by Thomas Andrewe, John Ailens and Alice Glendon. It was made on the 24th of August

1652 and John Crane 'sheepheard' was buried on the 26th August so this seems to have been a deathbed will. His small legacy to his absent sons suggests that they had perhaps gone oversees or had perhaps fought in the recent civil war. It looks like their parents did not know where they were and did not expect to see their sons again.

Thomas Pulley the elder of 'Wanlingborou', tanner, in 1657 left six pounds a year to his eldest son Thomas for forty-one years 'if he shall so long live to be paid' but if Thomas sells the annuity then it is to 'be utterly void'. He gave to Thomas all the goods in his parlour, buttery, kitchen, chamber and parlour in the garrett chamber over the Gate House and the chamber over the buttery, and all the firewood in the yard. To his son John he gave his freehold land. To his grandchild Jane he gave sixteen pounds to be paid when she got married or at twenty-one. To his grandchild Elizabeth he gave ten pounds. He gave forty shillings to his brother John in Higham Ferrers and left money to his married sisters. His nephew and apprentice Henry Pulley was given twenty pounds and various nephews and nieces also benefitted. He gave all his cow pastures to his grandchild Raphell. Thomas clearly enjoyed a sizeable extended family. His son Thomas was probably born in 1620 so was about thirty-eight when he inherited. There is no mention of his wife who had probably died in 1653.

Eighteenth and nineteenth century

In 1705, Samuel Nottingham, mariner, 'considering the perils of the seas' left all debts due to him to his brother John Nottingham, fellmonger. The will was proved three years later. In 1786, another Samuel Nottingham bequeathed various lands in New Hampshire to his sisters. He also bequeathed his plantation and house in Fat Hog Bay in the Virgin Islands of about thirty acres and his house in Irchester to his sister Hannah.

Elizabeth Troutbeck, widow, left her house and outbuildings near the churchyard and the sum of sixty pounds to her son Thomas. All her other property in the town was bequeathed to her son Edward and his heirs forever. To her son William she gave twenty pounds and all her plate to Edward and Thomas. Everything else was bequeathed to Edward. Witnesses to the will were Ann Underwood, Eliz: Brown and Charles Livesey. Her will was made on the 11th of May 1739 and

she was buried on the 20th June. She was the widow of The Reverend Mr John Troutbeck formerly vicar of 'Artleborough' who died the previous year.

Havey Sparkes, draper, left to his beloved wife Hannah one hundred pounds a month after his death and all his wearing linen, brass, pewter and all other household goods ('my plate only excepted'). He also gave to Hannah one hundred pounds a year during her natural life to be paid in half yearly instalments on the festival of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the festival of St Michael the Archangel with the money coming from rents of his real estate. He gave all his real and freehold estate and all the rest of his estate to his only son Havey Sparkes whom he made executor. Witnesses were John Underwood, Mary Gutteridge and John Hands. His will was written in August 1739 and proved eight months later. Hannah did well by this will since she lived for another forty-five years and died aged 107.

In 1740, Dorothy Freeman, widow, 'being weak and infirm' made a will as follows. To my aunt Jane Seyamore one guinea to buy a ring. To my brother Talbot Hackney twenty pounds. To my sister Martha the wife of William Rock, maltster, my clothes and two dozen of the worst of my napkins and one dozen of the worst towels, four of the worst tablecloths and six pair of the worst sheets. All the rest of my estate and lands and tenements to Seyamore Freeman and his heirs forever but if he dies before he is twenty-one then I will my estate equally to sisters Mary the wife of John Mouse, Martha the wife of William Rock and Sarah the wife of Wyth Canwarden. Her will was proved a month later.

Samuel Humphrey, butcher, made a will in 1755 in which he left his house and buildings to his son Cooper Humphrey and his heirs forever subject to a payment of ten pounds each to his daughters Susannah and Elizabeth. He bequeathed his house and buildings 'in a certain lane called Harriots Lane' presently occupied by John Price to his daughter Susannah and her heirs and his house and buildings in 'a certain Street called St Johns Street' now in the tenure of William Beal to his daughter Elizabeth. He gave the tools and implements of his trade, the 'bed and bedding in the room I lye in', and his clock to his son Cooper and everything else to Susannah and Elizabeth equally divided. He lived for four years after making his

will and Samuel made his mark so he had never learned to write. He willed that one thousand pounds should be invested for the benefit of his wife and after his wife's death the property and the household effects were to go to his executors.

In 1803, Joseph Overall, watchmaker, left his eldest son Thomas his land in the Market Stead quarter with the barn, malting kiln, malt house and other buildings that he purchased from Andrew Wilson bounded on the north by the Vicarage Ground and that part of a malt house adjoining being twenty-four yards long the parish church lying to the north. He gave two tenements lately purchased from John Broughton and his tenement known by the sign of the Wheat Sheaf to his son Thomas. To his second son Joseph he gave two tenements in the upper end quarter and a malting house in a certain place called Skitterdine. To his youngest son James he gave four tenements in the East End quarter. He gave 150 pounds each to his sons Joseph and James and to his daughters Mary and Sarah 300 pounds each when they reached twenty-one. All his other estate in the town was bequeathed to his wife Elizabeth. Witnesses were Thomas Barrett, Lovel Warren and John Hodson.

Francis Gibbons, builder, through his will of 1824 left 'the house wherein I now reside', his house occupied by Catherine Butt, widow, and his fifteen cottages 'situate and being in Broad Green' to his wife Ann. The fifteen cottages came to be known as Gibbons Row. He also gave his wife all his household goods, furniture, plate, linen and china. He gave instructions for the disposal of his property in Cambridge and he made extensive provisions for his daughter Mary Ann. Francis Gibbons had clearly been a successful businessman.

CHAPTER 7

LOOKING AFTER THE POOR

Charity schools helped to ease the burden on poor people and children particularly in the eighteenth century. But what of the wider population? Poor relief was an ongoing challenge for parishes and people often left money to the poor in their will.

In 1530, John Raynold of Wellingborough bequeathed twenty-six shillings and eight pence 'to the making of the patyticons in the Almys howsse yf it may be mayd in the churche yarde'[123]. This suggests that discussions were afoot to build an alms house possibly on the site later occupied by the school. John Ball in his will of 1539 gave four pounds to be distributed to the poor on the day of his burial. Henry Rosse in 1556 gave twelve pence each to twenty of the poorest houses in the town and four pence to sixty of the next poorest houses. In 1557 John Freeman gave twenty shillings to the poor people to be distributed on the day of his burial. Thomas Warner gave twenty shillings 'unto the poore people of the Towne Shipp of Wendlynborough' in 1560. There was an alms house in the late 1600s and a workhouse from the early 1700s. In 1861 the alms houses near the Castle fields were flooded when Swanspool brook burst its banks following heavy rain. Bequests specifically for the education of children were also made.

Wandering poor who passed through the parish, however, received little sympathy as two notes made in the parish register illustrate. First, "Jane Browne & Mary Walton of Holme in Spaldenmore in the County of Yorke were taken wandringe at Wendlingburghe contrary to the statute the xth day of March 1601 & there receaved punyshment & were licensed to pass (in 20 days) to the place aforesayd & were conducted to great harrowden by Thomas Bellowes". Second, "Whereas one Nathaniell Wall being taken as a vagrant at Wendlingburgh in the County of Northampton he hath received due correction according to the statute the xith day of Apryll anno dom 1608". The punishments alluded to here probably mean a public whipping. Later, they dispensed with the whipping but people who became a burden on a parish and who were legally settled elsewhere were removed to the parish that was responsible for them.

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123 *The Archaeological Journal*, 1913, vol LXX, 2nd Series Vol. XX, p.431.

Settlement and removal

One of the features of England's early poor laws was that parishes were responsible for maintaining their own poor. Other parishes would not pick up the bill. To help people move around the country for work, people carried settlement certificates showing where they were legally settled and thus the parish that would support them if needed. Removal orders were made when a person fell in need of poor relief and had to be transported back to the parish where they were legally settled. In 1761, for instance, Jane Simms and two small children were removed from Wellingborough to Castle Ashby. In 1778, the churchwardens of Horton in Oxfordshire certified that Hannah Lattaway wife of John and their daughter Betty 'did lately come to settle and inhabit' in Horton and had become chargeable to the parish. A removal order was made that they should be conveyed to Wellingborough being the place of their legal settlement.

In 1842, Edward and Jemima Underwood and their six children were in the workhouse at the expense of Mears Ashby parish. They were then removed to Yardley Hastings where they had legal settlement. In 1858, John Price a railway clerk absconded with a young girl and it was thought that they went to America. His wife and three children were removed from Wellingborough to Oxford because they could no longer support themselves. Mrs Price, a woman of respectable appearance was 'cast down with grief and sorrow'. In 1839, a woman aged 75 and her husband, 63, 'both decrepid' were removed from Southwark by order of the Board of Guardians there to Irchester where they were lawfully settled. They were conveyed from London to Wellingborough in a covered cart by a pauper who had been deputed to do the job and from Wellingborough to Irchester in a light cart. At Irchester the woman was found to be dead in the cart and the inquest found that she 'died by visitation of God'. Her husband was received into Irchester workhouse without making any complaint[124].

Illegitimacy

The authorities that supported the poor took a very dim view of children born out of marriage. The problem, they felt, was that single mothers soon became a burden on the parish as they could

124 *Champion*, 8th December 1839.

not usually support themselves and their child. If a child was born to an unmarried mother then the parish would try to identify the father and through formal bastardy orders and bonds make him contribute a weekly sum for the child's upkeep. If a father did not pay he went before a court and some were sent to gaol. Most infants were christened and the vicar would routinely note if a child was illegitimate. Such children were typically referred to as 'base', 'base born', 'natural' or much worse and from 1600 to 1609, two per cent of about 450 christenings were recorded as such. From 1800 to 1804, 1.7 per cent of infants taken for christening were described as illegitimate. The percentage remained low until relatively recently. It is now about fifty per cent nationally.

Although sex outside marriage must have been commonplace, people could get into trouble if they were found out. The Quarter Sessions in 1657 tell of Anne Ruff of Wellingborough, singlewoman, who was called to answer for the 'abominal sin of fornication'. In the mid eighteenth century, John Weekly of Wadenhoe was a serial offender who did penance five times for his affairs with three different women although he did marry the last one.

Sex outside marriage was one thing but having sex with a nun could get a man into big trouble. Take the case of Richard Gray, a married man, who was father to a child born of Elizabeth Willoughby at St Michael's in Stamford in 1422. In July that year in All Hallows the bishop made Gray swear on the Bible that he would not go to the priory again and that he would have no further contact with Elizabeth. In addition, he was, while wearing only his doublet and linen garments, to be flogged around one of the churches in Stamford on four Sundays or feast days. Furthermore, he was to do a similar penance in the marketplace in Stamford on four Fridays and to undertake a pilgrimage to Lincoln dismounting when he got within five miles of the cathedral and walking barefoot the rest of the way before offering a candle weighing one pound. That evening, Richard appeared before the bishop asking for clemency and the part about penance in the marketplace was commuted to a payment of twenty shillings to the nuns of St Michael's and another twenty shillings for the upkeep of the cathedral. Richard, however, had little intention of being so humiliated and appealed to the church court at Canterbury in November 1422 claiming that he had not performed his penance as he had been ill and confined to bed. He eventually appeared in

December but the court was not convinced by his claims and he was excommunicated which was a pretty big deal at the time[125].

Charities

Various charities were established over the years. The real estate of a charity called Orlebar's Dole gave an income of twenty pounds a year which was distributed to the poor at Easter. The charity derived from the will of John Orlebar, tallow chandler, of 1635 which gave £100 to the poor and money to invest to give an annual income and with this George Orlebar, John Freeman the younger, John Baw and Richard Lucas bought property at East Farndon.

In 1812, the real estate of the Wellingborough Town Land Charity set-up in 1595/6 consisted of tenements previously in the tenure of William Blunson blacksmith and Benjamin Middleton, a tenement used as a parish workhouse, a tenement, outbuildings and yards in East End quarter known as the Sow and Pigs, a cottage in West End quarter divided into several habitations for poor people and a close adjoining where several little houses were lately erected and inhabited by several poor people, one little house standing on the west side of the church yard called the alms house divided into several tenements occupied by the poor, two cottages in the High Street and two in Buckwell Lane occupied by poor people, one house called and anciently used as the free school on the north of the church yard, two plots of land allotted during parish enclosure to the feofees, and Mill field in Bozeat. The gross income therefrom was £532. The purpose of the charity was to pay a school master and usher twenty pounds between them yearly to teach Latin and accounts with the remainder going to the poor[126].

Others leaving money or land for charitable use were William Peake 1596, Edward Cheney 1662, John Pulley 1693, Samuel Knight 1728, Thomas Sheppard 1733 and Ann Glassbrook 1790. People from the Congregational church leaving charitable bequests included John Gibbs 1834, Adam Corrie 1846, Elizabeth Whitworth 1854, James Whitworth and Sarah Swannell 1877, Janet Kincaid 1878 and William Brown 1900[127].

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125 Power, E. (2010). *Medieval English nunneries c. 1275 to 1535*, Cambridge University Press.

126 Miscellaneous papers viz. Charitable Donations; parish returns and the poor clergy, Volume XII, 1814-15.

127 Salzman, L. (Ed.) (1937). *A History of the county of Northampton*, volume 4,

Churchwardens' accounts

The churchwardens' accounts for Wellingborough were written into a series of large books which survive from the early seventeenth century. The account for 1618 is reproduced below.

'The Accompt of Augustine Freeman John Ingram Jefferey Hobson and Thomas Batson churchwardens of Wellingborowe for the yere of our lord 1617 made the seaventh daye of Aprill 1618 in the Schoolhowse there as followeth.'

Remayning in their hands sithence the last yere	£4-16-6d
Remayneth in their hands to be gathered up upon two ould ceasem't [assessment] Bills	18s 8d
They had a ceasem't Bill made the third of October 1617 for	£10-14s-6d
They had a ceasem't Bill made the xxiij th of February 1617 for	£11-5s
They have lett the Church hadons this yere to corne for	£4
Some	£31-14s-8d
Whereof we have received of the said ceasem't bill made the third of October 1617	£8-16s-8d
Item of the ceasem't bill made the 24 of February 1617	£1-3s-6d
Item for the Church hadons	£4
Item the iiij l xvj s vj d that remained in our hands the last yere	£4-16s-6s
Some [Sum]	£18-16s-8d
Whereof we have layd out as by our bill of particulers as signed and allowed	£20-13s-5d

pp.135-146.

So remayneth due to us more then we have received	36s-9d
And remayneth to gather upp upon the said some ceasem't bills	£12-18s

Augustin Freeman, Batson (his mark), Ingram (his mark) Hobson (his mark)

This Accompte is allowed by us whose names are underwritten (signed)
Thomas Jones vicar, Willm Powers, Fisher (his mark), Henry Clendan, J Chirnock

Apr: 7 1618, Thomas Hensman, Robt Smyth (his mark) Ric Fisher (his mark), William Clendon, Frauncis Harryatt.
Overseers for the highways: Willm Tompson, Thomas Burges, Thomas Worlych, Willm Seares
Grass dealers: Richard Fisher Willm Page jun', Henr' Clendon, Hugh Chernock

The accounts show the amounts of money coming in and the amounts going out. They had evidently been reconciled and balanced before being written into the account book and do not show the itemised receipts and outgoings. The accounts were in effect audited and approved by the vicar and churchwardens. We also see the names of the overseers of the highways and of the grass dealers who were responsible for selling the crops grown on town lands.

Occasionally we see a little more detail such as in 1619 they received 6/8d from widow Ball for the grave in the church for her son John. In 1621/2 Lewis Trantom received two shillings for catching 'moulds' (moles) and twenty-two shillings were paid for 'two dosen of bread' for distribution to the poor.

The number of poor people

An indication of the number of poor in the town in the mid seventeenth century comes from hearth tax records. The hearth tax was collected twice a year at the rate of one shilling for each hearth in a dwelling. The names of householders paying tax were listed along with those who were exempt. Most were men although some

women are listed, often as widows. Of the 508 people listed in 1674, 258 were classed as exempt, 78 had one hearth, 68 had two hearths, 52 three hearths, 25 had four hearths and ten had five hearths. Seventeen people had more than five hearths in their home[128]. A person's exemption from the tax was certified by the minister, the oversees of the poor and churchwardens and grounds for exemption were being too poor to pay the church rate, living in a house worth less than twenty shillings a year or having an income of less than ten pounds a year, and hearths in schools and hospitals. Multiplying the number of exempt houses (258) by a typical family size suggests over a thousand poor and it is possible that people receiving alms were not listed.

The hearth tax shows the town in a relatively poor state. In Northampton the proportion of exempt households was thirty-one per cent, for the county thirty-nine per cent compared to fifty per cent at Wellingborough. The proportion of houses with four or more hearths was twenty-two per cent at Northampton, nine per cent for the county overall and ten per cent at Wellingborough. Insofar as the number of hearths reflected the distribution of wealth, then Wellingborough was like the rest of the county in terms of its share of wealthier residents but it had a much higher proportion of poor families. The hearth tax also shows that the total number of assessed households in the county was 22,345 which indicates a countywide population of at least 100,000.

The town's average annual spending on the poor from 1783 to 1785 was £1,297 which is the equivalent of about £194,000 today. It was similar to Kettering which spent £1,311 a year but less than Northampton which averaged £2,126 a year[129]. The next highest in Hamfordshoe was Earls Barton at £211. The number of people receiving poor relief is unknown but the population would have been about 2,800 which is equivalent to about £69 pounds per person per year in today's values.

Although some money was available to relieve the poor an article written in 1794 gives details of a scheme for poor relief which was quite advanced for its time. The article was by Mr Pew a surgeon

128 Burgess, J.H. (1978). *The social structure of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire*, 1524-1674, D. Phil. Thesis, University of York, vol. 2, pages 17, 50.

129 *Abstract of the returns made by the Overseers of the Poor*, 1788.

who had lived in the town. Incomes were more erratic then with, for example, labourers able to earn more in the summer than in the winter and older people having less ability to work than younger and fitter people. Pew claims that it was a custom in the country for people to squander what they earned in good times knowing that they could fall on poor relief if ever they needed to. As such, he says, people did not set any money aside in good times to ease the difficulties in harder times. Pew says that men who could earn fourteen shillings (now equivalent to about £70) a week could be reduced to poverty by just a week's illness. As a surgeon he had visited 'the dreary mansions of the wretched' where the 'filth and nastiness' of the furniture and bed coverings could cause disease 'in the most robust constitution'.

Mr Pew said that for forty years previously some residents had joined a society into which they paid one shilling a week which had to be paid for a year before they could claim any relief from the scheme. After a year if they could not work then they would receive six shillings a week for six months and three shillings a week after that. The same applied to people who could not work by virtue of their age and the scheme paid for burial fees. Pew claims the scheme was profitable and argued that it should be extended across the country. He claims to have done an exact enumeration of inhabitants, presumably around 1790, and says that 2,857 people lived in the town with 847 men over eighteen and 1,100 women above seventeen[130].

The workhouse

By the seventeenth century, parishes were responsible for looking after their own poor. Initially, people too weak or too ill to work (the 'impotent poor') were given benefits in the form of money, food and fuel. The 'idle poor' in contrast got no sympathy. Workhouses were set-up in large towns around 1700 and the idea spread to smaller towns particularly in the south midlands and Essex. They were created to provide work for people and to house people who could not look after themselves. Wellingborough had a workhouse by around 1730 and in 1750 the churchwardens and others agreed to contract with Peter Cheer of Saffron Walden to manage it. They agreed that he 'shall have the Care Order Management & Employment of all

130 *Literary Magazine and British Review*, March 1794, pp.182-186.

the said poor that shall or may be from time to time sent or put into the said workhouse to be there employ'd maintained & provided for'. He was to receive a weekly payment of seven pounds ten shillings and was to provide the poor 'with all manner of Necessaries of Meat Drink washing lodging & clothing as they ought to be over & above what he may make them earn by such work labour & employment as he shall put them to as they are capable of.'

The parish was to pay for coal and hospital expenses, expenses relating to the settlement or removal of poor persons, the costs of putting out children to be apprentices or servants, the costs of illegitimate children born in the parish and the costs of buckets for the workhouse. What people earned while in the workhouse contributed towards their clothing as necessary. Mr Cheer was to agree to inspections of the workhouse from time to time. In 1754 a Vestry meeting 'agreed to allow thirty pounds to be raised by a tax and to be immediately laid out and applied by the churchwardens and oversees of the poor for clothing the most necessitous poor in the workhouse at their discretion.'

Understandably, the overseers really disliked people who added to the problem of the poor such as men who deserted their families leaving them chargeable to the parish. In 1755 culprits included John Robinson, Joseph Tester a fishmonger, Edward Woodroof a shoemaker and Benjamin Pendrid a flaxdresser who had all left wives and children on the parish. Sometimes both parents ran away such as Edward and Mary Jackson who left four children behind. The Masters of the workhouse placed a notice in the *Mercury* announcing that 'Persons should not aid these people who expose their wives and children to hunger and nakedness'[131].

An inventory of 1765 names the workhouse inmates and lists their clothing and its value. Seven men aged from 62 to 80 had shoes, stockings, shirts, breeches, waistcoats, coats, neckstocks (nobody had one), caps and hats. There were seventeen boys aged from three to sixteeen. For most it gives the value of their clothing but for four boys including three-year-old David Barringham and six-year-old Thomas Olney it simply says, 'Rags'. Nineteen girls are listed aged between three and twenty-eight. Their clothing comprised of stockings, shoes, aprons, stomachers, bodices, shifts, gowns, handkerchiefs, day caps and night caps.

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131 *Northampton Mercury* 17th February 1755.

Of the girls, seventeen had clothing described as rags including three-year-old Judith Lawton and four-year-old Elizabeth Rowell. Seven women are listed and the oldest was Mary Hobbs aged 76. In total, fifty people were resident in the workhouse on 10th November 1765. Little Judith Lawton was christened in June 1762 and was buried in December 1765. No other Lawtons were in the workhouse at the same time and nor are there any burials of people who might have been her parents. We can only guess at why she was away from her family and in the workhouse. Perhaps she had been abandoned.

In 1777 at the time of a smallpox outbreak, a Vestry meeting agreed that Mr Francis Weaver, surgeon, 'shall immediately prepare and inoculate for small pox all such poor persons belonging to and resident within this parish as shall be desirous and willing to be so inoculated.' By 1776 the workhouse had capacity for seventy inmates. The Wellingborough Poor Law Union came into effect on 9th July 1835 and a new building on Irthlingborough Road catered for up to 250 inmates. Infirmary blocks were added in 1875, 1899 and 1928 which became the Park Hospital in 1938[132].

Doubtless life in the workhouse was best avoided but happily the wealthier inhabitants of the town were not without charity. On Christmas Day in 1857 the 115 inmates sat down to a plentiful dinner of roast beef and plum pudding with roots and vegetables. There was as much ale and tobacco as needed and excellent cake and tea for 'the females'. The day was agreeably and harmoniously spent with the inmates grateful for the treat. In July 1858 an extraordinary tea gathering took place on Broad Green. All the poor inhabitants over seventy years of age sat down to a substantial tea feast under the shady trees. The number including inmates in the workhouse was 115. The repast consisted of tea, ham, bread and butter, and plumcake followed by wine, ale, ginger beer and a plentiful supply of cherries for which the town was famed. One venerable matron of 93 regaled herself with a pipe after her repast. Those unable to attend had a portion of the good fare sent to their homes. On Christmas Day in 1858 the one hundred or so inmates were as customary treated to roast beef and plum pudding as well as beer, tobacco and snuff; nuts and oranges; and 'the females' with tea and cake. The treat was provided by various tradesmen of the town. Able bodied men

132 Higginbotham, P. (2007). *Workhouses of the Midlands*, The History Press Ltd.

and boys were employed in the extensive garden grounds which were profitable for the Union.

In 1877 the Board of Guardians investigated whether the rations given to inmates were comparable to those given elsewhere. Concern was growing that giving them alcoholic beverages was not a good thing. John Cook, 73, who worked on the farm, did the milking and looked after the pigs was badly ruptured. He was allowed half a pint of beer a day and extra rations of five ounces of bread and three quarters of an ounce of cheese as were all the men who worked on the farm. Marriott the coal man had extra rations of bread, cheese and beer and his work was very laborious. 'The woman Fairgraves' was superintendent of the wash house and her work was repulsive and laborious. She had meat every day with bread and cheese and one pint of porter (a dark beer). Elizabeth Cox an assistant in the wash house had half a pint of beer a day with extra rations of bread and cheese in the morning. Five other wash house assistants had extra bread, cheese and beer in the morning and tea with bread and butter in the afternoon but only on the day they worked. The Master had recently wondered how he could get the cesspools emptied with his staff of infirm men and the prospect of no beer to offer them. Given that the cost of beer was only up to three shillings a week it looks like they decided to keep allowing it[133].

In return for their upkeep the inmates were expected to behave themselves. In 1892, a lad in the workhouse called Harry Douglas threw a crust and hit a porter on the nose. He went before the Petty Sessions and got two months imprisonment[134]. To us this seems harsh but at that time the authorities had little sympathy with anyone who appeared ungrateful for the charity that they were receiving. The 1891 census shows a Harry Douglas aged sixteen lodging in Northampton Terrace in Herriott's Lane and shows that he was blind.

Benjamin Middleton, a pauper, left the workhouse without permission in 1865. He was later found drunk in the town and given fourteen days' hard labour. A pauper in the workhouse was given fourteen days in gaol in 1894 for refusing to work and in 1901

133 *Northampton Mercury*, 9th January 1858; 10th July 1858; 8th January 1859; 24th March 1877, p.8.

134 *Women's Herald*, 3rd Sept 1892.

a tramp got seven weeks' hard labour for refusing to work and wilfully damaging a door. His complaints about the bread and the shirt he was given to wear may not have helped his defence. Another tramp refused to work on only bread and water and after saying so in court got fourteen days' hard labour. In 1907 a strike occurred among the male inmates of Wellingborough workhouse because they were not happy with the quality of the oatmeal gruel served at breakfast before they began their daily tasks. Three ringleaders were taken before the magistrates and sentenced to between three and six weeks' imprisonment.

CHAPTER 8

THE FREE SCHOOL AND BOARD SCHOOLS

The Free School

Early history
Statutes for the governance of a Free School were issued in 1595 although a school seems to have existed in the town before then[135]. Sir John Holland kept a school at Wellingborough around 1537 and a long-serving church organist, Thomas Castelyn, kept a 'song school' at about the same time, presumably for instruction of the choristers. The Free School seems likely to have been established in 1549 using incomes from lands previously held by the Gild of St Mary (established in 1392) and with incomes from the vicar and the town[136]. Advertisements for the school in the early nineteenth century proclaimed that the School was founded in 1549 although they later changed to 1595.

William Charnock was master of a grammar school in the 1570s. The Charnocks were catholic bailiffs and there were standing feuds between them and dominant Protestant groups. In 1575 a rival school had started in the church which Roger Charnock tried to close[137]. A case in the Court of Chancery in 1580 shows that Charnock and others obstructed a school by falsely claiming title to land and properties and stopping rent payments,

'*the benefit whereof hath heretofore bene ymployed and yet oughte to be by the inhabitants of the said towne for and towards the mayteynance of a free or common schole there within the said towne for the better education and trayning upp of the yonge children' such that 'the said schole is like utterly to be overthrowen to the great hinderance of learning'*[138].

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135 N. Carlisle (1818). *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England and Wales*, Vol. 2.

136 *Victoria County History of Northamptonshire*, Vol. 4.

137 Burgess, J.H. (1978). *The social structure of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire*, 1524-1674, Vol. 1, p.210, D. Phil. Thesis, University of York; National Archives STAC 5/S3/30, 5/S61/36.

138 The National Archives C78/16/14

The case against Charnock and his confederates was brought by Anthony Rone, John Clarke, Edward Webbe and Thomas Wesson acting on behalf of the town. The use of 'heretofore' in the court case suggests that a free school had been operational for some time.

Mr Robert Law was 'Cheefe Schoolemaister of the free-schoole of Wendlingburgh' in January 1598 and the parish register notes that Alexander Crosley of Wendlingburghe in the county of Northampton (Chefe Schoolmaster),

'*by reason of his sicknes & infirmeness & weakeness of body is licensed to eat fleshe for one weeke & if he do not recover his perfect health by the weekes out then he is licensed further for the tyme of Lentt; Richard Sutton vicar of Wendlingburghe*'.

Where the school was at that time is unknown but new premises were built about 1619 and still stand on the north side of the church yard. Given that the Free School never carried the name of a founder, Bridges felt that it must have been established by the wealthier inhabitants of Wellingborough rather than through an individual endowment. The Greek inscription above the old entrance means, 'To the educated I owe everything, to the uneducated, nothing'.

Inscription above the old School entrance

Funding for the school came largely from rents for the town lands that were managed by a network of trustees. Bequests were also made and Edward Pickering gave £150 in 1682 and Richard Fisher through his will of 1711 gave forty pounds yearly to Wellingborough of which ten pounds went to the Master of the Free School, five pounds a year to the Undermaster, and five pounds to the Bead House at Higham Ferrers on condition that they cared for one poor inhabitant of Wellingborough there. Fisher's charity came from renting fifty acres in a place called the Ham and any surpluses were given to the overseers of the poor for disbursement. These early bequests remain inscribed over the main entrance to the old school. Some of the income from land rents were spent on the school. Richard Fisher was collector of the town land rents in 1675 and held various posts in town governance thereafter variously acting as a feoffee and a 'subsidyman'. In 1707 he was recorded as being 'at the Vines' which may have been a town house or an Inn kept in the family since a Richard Fisher junior of the 'Vine' died in 1632.

The town feoffees account book recorded that in 1673 four shillings were given to 'Widow Darling for beer and for a messenger to call the Subsidy men together to elect a Chiefe School Master'. The Chief School Master, Mr Ogle, was paid 'three quarters of a year's salary and by common consent £2-10s more' (total £17-10s). Mr Evans his usher was paid ten pounds for his year's salary and two pounds ten shillings 'more for officiating in the Chief School Master's place one quarter vacancy'.

Edward Marriott was paid 9/10d for 'mending the school house windows'. Mr Ogle and Mr Evans received salaries of twenty pounds and ten pounds respectively in 1676 and a further eight shillings went on mending the windows. In 1678, £16-10-11d was laid out 'in flooring the schoole mending the seats, mending & new leading & pointing the windows & spent upon the workmen'. Mending the windows was a regular occurrence. In 1685 John Hilton was paid eleven shillings 'for worke done over the schoole house doore' which may have involved putting up one of the inscriptions still in place.

Curriculum and management

English and arithmetic were taught in the Lower school and Latin in the Upper school. Regulations from 1812 required that pupils attended from 9-12 in the morning and 1-4 in the afternoon. Admission was

not governed by age or length of stay. All children were expected to attend church on prayer days and vacations amounted to one week at Easter, Whitsuntide, St Luke and two weeks at Christmas. In the early 1800s around thirty boys attended the under school. For a time in the early 1800s there were no scholars in the Grammar School and the Master's position was a sinecure role. This was confirmed by the town solicitor, John Newton Goodall, who was questioned by a Select Committee about the education of the poor in 1818. He said that the grammar school had been a sinecure for twenty years or more until the previous Christmas. During this time he said that the Master had been paid £35 a year from an estate at Burton Latimer even though he had no pupils for years[139]. This may have been because children were leaving after their basic education in English and arithmetic. There were no limits on numbers attending, but as the school consisted of a lower room and an upper room only it could never have taken many.

Boarding costs at Wellingborough Grammar School were thirty guineas a year in 1828[140]. A directory of 1849 says that the upper school was free to residents of the town for instruction in Latin only but no boy was admitted unless he was deemed capable of learning Latin. The Lower school dealt with reading, writing and arithmetic and was also free but there was a quarterly charge of two shillings for books. The School aimed to prepare boys for university, professions and commercial life and boarders could board in the town or with the Headmaster, Reverend Auden[141].

Income to the Free School was often greater than expenditure. In 1862, for example, income was £563 against an expenditure of £283. As in previous years, the surplus was spent on 'beautifying' the town. Gates were placed at the top of Church Lane and one hundred pounds were spent on a road to the churchyard from the Market Square. Fifty pounds were allocated to remove Mr Froggatt's house in the Market Square to 'a less objectionable site', and £148 on extending the paving in the town[142].

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139 *Morning Chronicle*, 16th December 1818.

140 *Northampton Mercury*, 20 December 1828.

141 Whellan, W. (1849). *History, gazetteer and directory of Northamptonshire*, London: Whittaker & Co;
Northampton Mercury, 14th October 1865.

142 *Northampton Mercury*, 11th April 1863.

The Free School had always had a strong allegiance to the Church of England and a letter to the local newspaper in 1869 questioned whether the continuing appointment of clergymen as headmasters was in its best interests. The main point was that the world was changing and that, given their other duties, clergymen, were not necessarily best suited to an increasingly competitive school environment. The author of the letter (W.A. Hope) implied that boys were being pushed into classical studies 'when they can neither spell correctly or tell you the chief towns of the counties of England' and urged the trustees of the Grammar School to look beyond the clergy for future appointments[143].

In 1871, a meeting of dissenters held in the school room attached to Cheese Lane chapel felt that 'very much painful feeling' had been aroused by the trustees of the Grammar School by their open determination to exclude dissenters from their ranks. Mr Pearce Sharman had recently failed to be elected simply because he was a non-conformist and, furthermore, Mr Sharman was a member of the Liberation Society which campaigned to disconnect the established church from State affairs. In relation to the school, this meant separating the church from school governance. The meeting decided to protest to the Charity Commissioners[144].

The following year, the Annual General Meeting of the Free School Charity received an examiners' report which noted that in the lower grammar school 'a very perceptible advance has been made in most subjects of instruction.' English history had been dropped and animal physiology has replaced acoustics, heat and light. No boy was given marks in arithmetic without thought. Reading had improved but the understanding of the New Testament and the Catechism were below expectations. The recent death of Mr Percival the late Assistant Master was much lamented. All efforts were made so that boys were not beaten 'if possible'.

Mr T.S. Curtis on behalf of the town's ratepayers challenged the trustees on their practice of excluding any dissenter from being a trustee and argued that all religious distinctions should be put aside. People, he said, should be appointed who 'were best fitted for the post'. Although a few dissenters had previously served as trustees,

143 *Northampton Mercury*, 20th November 1869.

144 *Northampton Mercury*, 30th December 1871, p. 8.

the current practice was to not elect them. At the heart of the matter lay the interests of a Church of England charity distributing revenues from the charity estate in a town that had a strong dissenting population. Mr William Dulley (a dissenter) pointed out that the question should be not what a man is or is not, but will he be efficient and capable of discharging his duties. Nevertheless, the matter was not resolved and the trustees stuck to their position that dissenters could not be elected[145].

A Technical Institute and a Girls' School

The AGM in 1875 agreed that more schools were needed and considered setting aside funds for new buildings. Also discussed was what to do with the piece of land belonging to the feoffees left over from building the new road near the London Road cemetery and does suggest that the site of the current school was already in their possession. There was clearly some disquiet in the town about the Free School and attendance dwindled in the 1800s picking up occasionally. New premises were built in 1879/80 in London Road for what was then called the Second Grade Grammar School[146].

Following 'public agitation' in 1894, the Charity Commissioners told Wellingborough Grammar School to build a new Third Grade Grammar School. The new school was to be of a kind that would qualify for grants in science, art and technical education and the Education Department had decided that grants would not continue without a new build and that it would not sanction the extension of the Second Grade School that the governors had sought[147]. The governors met to discuss the Charity Commission's letter instructing them to find a new site other than the one proposed by them near the existing school and to which the townsfolk had objected[148]. Governors did not like this, arguing that it would raise building costs and the costs of teaching. Furthermore, a new Technical Institute was proposed for the town. However, the governors decided to proceed with a new Third Grade School on the condition that it was along the lines of the present school and that site costs were small. They

145 *Northampton Mercury*, 6 April 1872, p.4.
146 Palmer & Palmer, *A History of Wellingborough*, pp. 248-249.
147 *Northampton Mercury*, 1 June 1894, p. 5.
148 *Northampton Mercury*, 23 November 1894, p. 7.

also wanted it to be of a commercial nature and not an organized science school as the Commissioners had proposed. There was much difference of opinion among governors and the Vigilance Committee about the location and ethos of the new school. The new site chosen was to be Ham Joint (at the bottom of Sheep Street on the east side) but this was not used. In 1895 the Commission stipulated that the Third Grade Grammar School should be built in Church Street.

A Technical Institute funded by a council grant and an extra penny on the rates was built in Church Street, which was widened at the time, in 1898 on the site of some old tenements that belonged to the town. It was equipped with rooms for the teaching of science, shoemaking, art, and various trades. A Commercial School built next to it under the direction of the Grammar School governors was opened in 1899[149]. This offered a general higher education equipping students for a range of careers and it replaced the previous Third Grade Grammar School which was later used as a church hall[150]. Traditional subjects were taught there but it struggled academically and financially. The fees were considered low and the parents of boys attending generally had low incomes.

In 1903 the Grammar School governors were reminded that the charity foundation had previously only been used to the benefit of boys and were petitioned to provide a High School for Girls[151]. Also pointed out was the current use of the charity to benefit boys from outside the county and sometimes the country, while girls from the town had no access to higher education. Governors voted to discontinue the Commercial School in 1903 and offered to take younger boys into the Grammar School at three guineas a year and older boys at four guineas. In 1904 they voted to establish a High School for Girls although the Urban Council objected to the portion of Fisher's Charity previously allotted to the Commercial School being diverted to a new Girls' School as doing so would benefit people who are not in need of charity[152].

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149 *Northampton Mercury*, 30th September 1898, p. 5.

150 *Northampton Mercury*, 8th July 1904 p. 5.

151 *Northampton Mercury* 15th May 1903 p. 7; 17th July 1903 p. 3; 31st July 1903 p.7,

152 *Northampton Mercury*, 11th September 1903; 15th *January* 1904, p. 7; 5th February 1904 p.7

Other early schools

In addition to the Free School and charity schools there were also some small private schools operating by the late 1700s, if not before. Widow Skillman 'schooldame' died in 1703 and presumably ran a private school or a charity school. In the mid-1700s, Thomas Cowper, mathematician and astronomer, ran a school in a building next to his house and taught night classes in Finedon and Mears Ashby to supplement his income as a land surveyor.

In July 1790 the *Northampton Mercury* advertised,

"Wellingborough Boarding School. Miss Bovell respectfully informs her friends and the public that her school will open for the reception of YOUNG LADIES on Monday the 19th. Board including writing and all sorts of needlework, 16 guineas per annum; Entrance 10s 6d; Dancing 15s per quarter".

In 1797 the *Mercury* advertised,

"Mrs Green and her daughter respectfully acquaint their friends and the public that their school opens January 23rd. Mrs Green intends to limit the number of her boarders to four and flatters herself that she shall give satisfaction to such persons who wish to have their daughters instructed in useful works. Fourteen guineas a year. One guinea entrance; washing excluded. Writing and arithmetic by a proper Master"[153].

By 1833, Wellingborough had sixteen infant schools including one endowed by Elizabeth Goodman. In the other fifteen schools, eighty-four boys and ninety-seven girls were taught at their parents' expense. There were six 'day schools' of which the Grammar school had forty-four boys of whom eighteen were boarders and the Lower school had about 100 boys. Freeman's Charity School had thirty boys and thirty girls. There were two Lancasterian schools each receiving thirty-two girls meeting three times a week for two and half hours in the morning and evening. One began in 1819, the other in 1833. They were supported by annual subscription and by a payment of one penny a week from parents. Another school had eighteen boys and another thirty girls and in both cases the parents paid for their education.

153 *Northampton Mercury*, 10th July 1790 and 14th January 1797.

Sunday Schools were a big operation and in 1835 All Hallows' Sunday School took 362 children, two Independent Sunday schools catered for 216 children, a Wesleyan school received 98 children and another received 121 children of all denominations[154]. Mr William Corrie established a Sunday School in the town at his own expense in 1785[155].

The idea for an Institute was mooted in 1832 as a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. In 1860 a new infants' school was to be built adjacent to the chapel in Cheese Lane and the recently formed Wellingborough School Masters and Mistresses Association noted a growing public interest in education and how it would alleviate 'the evils existing at present in our social systems'. A series of 'penny readings' was held at the Mechanics' Institute in the Corn Exchange. Members of the Institute sat for certificates in a range of subjects awarded by the Society of Arts[156].

In his memories of Wellingborough, Caleb Archer recalled a girl's British School above an infants' school in the building that was for a long time occupied by Rowlatt's store in Church Lane. There were also several Dame schools (Adventure schools) where children were taught reading, writing, arithmetic and needlework[157]. Twenty-one existed in 1871 with an average total attendance of 298. Almost all children attending were under seven and many were under three[158]. They seem to have been in rented buildings or private houses and the main concerns about them were overcrowding, sanitary conditions and their educational value. In time, children left Dame schools to attend Board schools.

Board Schools

In 1872 a meeting was held with the intention of establishing a new School Board for the town. The Education Act encompassed all 'efficient' schools and the Government's inspector had declared that all the town's schools met the criteria and so the motion was passed.

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154 Accounts and Papers Relating to Education, Volume XLII, 1835, House of Commons – p. 679.

155 *Northampton Mercury*, 13th June 1785.

156 *Northampton Mercury*, 8th September 1832 p.3; 22nd March 1860 p.8; 31st March 1860; 20th June 1863 p.7.

157 Archer, C. (1927). *My Recollections of Wellingborough*, Archer & Goodman.

158 *Northampton Mercury*, 15th July 1871 p. 1.

The Board was to have byelaws requiring compulsory attendance, empowering it to fine parents for not sending their children to school, although there were allowable reasons for non-attendance, and giving the power to waive the 'children's pence' for poor families. The main business of the School Board was to consider finances, estate management, fixtures and fittings, resignations and appointments of teachers, attendance, and to consider the reports of Government Inspectors.

There were 700 school places in the town at the time which was several hundred below Government requirements. Recent public meetings had resolved to build a new British School to remedy the deficiency in school places to replace the existing British School which was 'in a very inconvenient place' and the 'little boys' school' at Little Zoar but no building had taken place. A subsequent Board meeting contemplated enlarging Freeman's School by eighty-six places and moved to discontinue the day school in Zoar Yard and the Girls' British School as neither had an endowment and the premises had become unsuitable. Eight Dame schools had been deemed inefficient and should close[159].

The School Board being conscious that the number of school places was well below what was required recommended to the Education Department that the town should have two new large schools each for 500 children. Tenders were accepted to build Park Street school for £4,181 (on a site that was previously allotments) and Broad Green school for £3,191. Funding came from loans repayable over fifty years. Byelaws enacted in July 1873 required all children aged five to thirteen to attend a Public Elementary School with some exceptions allowed. Both new schools opened on the 11th August 1873[160]. Attendance was often well below expectations and many children attended half-time although this was not allowed unless the workplace that they attended was covered by the Factories and Workshops Act. At the discretion of the School Board, older children could be excused attendance if they had achieved a certain educational standard and children over ten could be allowed half-time attendance on the application of parents if their reasons were accepted by the Board. Parents were often called to appear before the Board to explain their

159 *Northampton Mercury*, 25th February 1871, p. 7; 29th July 1871, p. 7.

160 *Northampton Mercury*, 4th April 1874, p.7.

child's lack of attendance. Magistrates imposed fines on parents who were persistent offenders.

Wellingborough expanded rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century on both the east and west sides. There were never enough school places and this was particularly so on the new east side Victoria estate. The first Victoria school was operated by Congregationalists and residents petitioned the Board for a new school. Parents, who were mostly non-conformists, had concerns about sending their children to All Saints as it was a denominational school. The existing Victoria school was converted into a Board school in 1881[161] and enlarged in 1886 to accommodate another 290 places. There had previously been some objection to a new Board school on the Victoria estate from the trustees of Freeman's School and from All Saints, both arguing that there was already enough capacity in the town and that another school would increase the burden on the ratepayers[162]. In the face of rapid expansion of the east side, however, their objections were short-lived.

An event in 1883 suggests the building of the first Victoria school might have left something to be desired. While the headmaster Mr Topham and Miss Strachan the sewing mistress and the assistant teachers were giving lessons in the upper rooms several yards of the ceiling suddenly fell with a loud crash bruising and scratching several of the children. About 180 children were present and the poor things were almost beside themselves with terror, clinging to the teachers, climbing on the desks and making a rush for the staircase. Mr Topham prevented the boys from leaving and Miss Strachan did the same with the girls. Several members of the School Board appeared and the alarm subsided. Meanwhile, the wildest rumours circulated and agitated parent rushed about in all directions. But for the prompt action in preventing the children from leaving the consequences might have been more serious. As it was, the children were more frightened than hurt. The morning teaching was prematurely closed[163].

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161 *Northampton Mercury*, 4th December 1880, p. 7; 4th December 1880; 31st December 1881.

162 *Northampton Mercury*, 25th December 1880, p. 5; 5th February 1881 p. 6.

163 *Northampton Mercury*, 14th July 1883, p.6.

Victoria Board School built 1895

St Barnabas Voluntary school which catered for children in the expanding West End had opened by 1880 and was held in the original iron church that opened in 1873. An All Saints' day school was operating by 1877 and various events were held to raise £2,500 for a school building. A site near All Saints church was purchased but it was later deemed unsuitable and was sold to a stonemason. The present site, formerly a carpenter's shop, was purchased in 1878. All Saints infants' school was opened very close to the main school in 1880 and classes were also held in the church rooms at the bottom of Finedon Road (presumably the Dickens Memorial Hall). A Catholic Elementary day school opened in the original iron church in Knox Road (close to Victoria school) in 1884 but the School Board was in opposition to it receiving a grant as they argued that there were sufficient places at other schools nearby and further denominational schools were not needed in the town[164]. The former corrugated iron Catholic school in Ranelagh Road was taken down in 1895 and removed to Station Road in Rushden. There it served as a mission room for the Wesleyan Methodist church.

164 *Northampton Mercury*, 2nd April 1887, p. 7.

The former Catholic school re-located to Rushden.

Miss Brown, Lady Principal, advertised 'A thorough English education guaranteed to young ladies and superior lessons in accomplishments' at St Helier's College in 1885. St Helier's, which was once the town library, still stands in the High Street.

Westfield School opened in Westfield Road in January 1901 to take the place of the boys' school in Rock Street with the intention of accommodating girls 'at some future time'. There were four classrooms, two to take sixty children each and two taking fifty children each. The opening speeches praised the growth of education in the town noting that in 1900, 2,508 children attended Board Schools and 1,101 attended other schools. There were seventy-six teachers including eight headteachers, forty-two assistants, seventeen pupil teachers and nine 'candidates'. The Victoria Schools opened five years previously were already full-up. The benefits of education to individuals, to society and to Britain were outlined to applause from the audience. Mr N.P. Sharman said that through education those with energy and perseverance can rise in the social scale and in formally declaring the school open said let us "Educate, educate, educate"[165].

165 *Northampton Mercury*, 25th January 1901, p.3

CHAPTER 9

CHARITY SCHOOLS

Freeman's School

Early schooling in Wellingborough was made possible through the generosity of the town's wealthier residents. As John Cole put it so succinctly[166],

'*The wants of the lower orders of the community appear to be, happily, objects of consideration with the more affluent inhabitants of the town; evident by the establishment of several charitable institutions to afford instruction and relief.*'

Through his will of 24th May 1710, John Freeman gave his house in the West End to Thomas Symonds of Wellingborough, gentleman, to convert it into a charity school for the education of poor children. It was located on the south side of Oxford Street close to the junction with Silver Street. Following Freeman's generosity, various other sums were bequeathed and invested to fund charity schools. Richard Fisher's will of May 1711 bequeathed money for the maintenance of the Master and Under Master of the Free School and gave £20 yearly for the benefit of such poor children as shall be put into the charity school 'if the erection of it then in design should take effect'[167]. Fisher must have known that John Freeman intended to establish a charity school upon his death. Mary Roane through her will gave £100 in 1717 to the charity school for girls[168]. John Robinson of Cransley gave £100 in 1793.

Benefactions to the town were once recorded in gold lettering on three large boards kept in the Vestry[169]. One of the boards recorded that 'Eliz. Goodman late of this parish directed by her will that poor children should be taught English by some widow of good character,

166 Cole, J. (1837). *The History and Antiquities of Wellingborough*, p.230.
167 Bridges, J. (1791). *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*, Vol. II, p. 153.
168 Mary Roane was the daughter of Thomas Roane & Matilda Lane. She died in 1717 aged 63. They lived in the house that became the Golden Lion.
169 Cole, p. 90.

to be elected by the minister and churchwardens, the expense of the schooling and buying of books to be paid out of three houses in the High Street. A yearly rent of £3.' The Master of Freeman's School reported that in the late 1700s there was a small school funded by the will of Elizabeth Goodman and kept by Hannah Wadsworth, widow, for six children aged two to five years. The Master noted that children were taught the alphabet but 'they were the children of poor persons sent to her to be more out of the way than for instruction'.

The exact population of Wellingborough around 1700 is unknown but a religious census of 1674 gives a population of 2,715. In the early eighteenth century there were above 700 families and the first accurate population census of 1801 recorded 3,325 inhabitants. As such, throughout the eighteenth century there must have been at least several hundred children of what would now be considered school age in Wellingborough but only a very small proportion had access to a place at school.

Samuel Knight, a cutler, through his will of 1728 left most of his estate and property to his wife Ann (nee Underwood). He also gave £100 to the trustees of the charity school (Freeman's School) to be invested or used to buy land and the profits used for the benefit of the school as the trustees see fit. He also gave £100 to the trustees of the town land rents to be invested or to buy land and the profits from the land to be applied half yearly to the teaching and instructing of fifteen male children of poor parents of Wellingborough to read English until they are fit to attend the Grammar school. The boys were to be chosen by the vicar and churchwardens. He also gave forty shillings a year for ever to be used for the purchase of loaves of 'brown wheaten bread called three penny loaves' and given away on the 17th November to the poor inhabitants of the town. He further desired that the minister and churchwardens should ask the baker to carry the bread in his panniers to the dwelling houses of the poor and he desired that John Clendon, baker, should bake the bread.

Samuel Knight died aged 56 about four weeks after making his will in which he desired that he be buried as close to his late son John as was possible. A memorial in All Hallows shows that John died on the 17th November 1721 aged seventeen; the bread was to be distributed on the anniversary of his death. Samuel, Ann his wife, their infant son Samuel, and John were all buried in the same grave. A memorial

inscription in All Hallows recorded that Samuel was 'industrious in his calling; a kind husband a tender Parent & a faithful friend'. The memorial said of his son John, 'A Youth not only of very Promising Hopes But of Uncommon Proficiency in Humane Learning & in Christian Knowledge.'[170] It seems quite plausible that Samuel had invested in his son's education, which perhaps took place at the Free School, only to see fate deny him the use of his education in later life. Samuel Knight was moved to help other children achieve things that fate had denied his own.

Knight's endowment for the teaching of poor children seems to have been used to establish 'Mr Knight's school' in Buckwell End which was kept at some time by Richard Warden until his death in 1786 and then discontinued. The Master of Freeman's School found that no other charity schools had existed since the wills of Freeman and Fisher. He could not discover the original use of Freeman's property in the West End but the old people of the town had told him that the house 'was very ancient' and was once a spinning and weaving school for ten girls and ten boys who were given new clothes every other year. With the demise of the wool trade and the rise of lace making, the boys were turned out and twenty girls were taken in and taught lace making. Bibles, prayer books and clothing were provided. A memorandum of 1777 shows that income from the charity estate was sufficient to allow some expansion and the trustees ordered that the number of poor children be increased to twenty-five. They were to be clothed with 'a gown and with a petticoat made of blue tilly willy yard wide at 16d per yard and that they be furnished with other apparel as before'[171].

There is some evidence of friction at the girls' school between the Mistress, children and parents[172]. In 1712, Mercy Ball ran away with her clothes after eight months and, according to the school, the idle life of her parents had not prepared her for school discipline. Elizabeth Smith's mother was 'troublesome' and unhappy with the way the Mistress was correcting her daughter and because she would not stop bothering the Mistress 'in her duty' Elizabeth was 'turned out'. In 1713, Anne Harris 'a girl train'd up in begging and of a most stubborn temper' was slothful and feigned illness to avoid

170 Cole, pp. 78-79.

171 NRO document ZA3719

172 NRO document 350P/453 Feoffees account book.

doing her 'day's task'. 'Neither correction nor encouragement' made her conform to the rules of the school. On the plus side, in 1716 three girls were noted to have behaved themselves dutifully for four and three-quarter years and went out to service.

The trustees' account book[173] illustrates how the charity income was spent in the early years. In 1712/3, expenditure amounted to £111-6-11¼ and income came to £110-14-11½ as shown below. Garments made by the children were used to supplement school income.

Havey Sparkes steward Charity School Debtor Expended from ye 1st of November 1712 to ye 24th of June 1713	
Provisions	£-s-d
Meat, beer, wheat, barley, cheese, pease, butter, salt, oatmeal, barm, milk, roots & incidents	24-12-5¾
Candles	1-14-11¼
Washing	
-Soap £0-13-3; Starch & blue £0-3-0 1/4; Buck ashes £0-8-8 ½	1-4-11¾
To Incidents	2-6-2¾
Firing with its charge of carriage	8-9-10
Wages & Salaries paid	7-18-4
Goods bought into ye house	9-7-9½
Total	55-14-7
Utensils & Conveniences for ye use of spinning	4-12-1½

173 NRO document ZA 3719

68 nightcaps, 22 day caps, 20 bands, 36 cheque handkerchiefs £1-15-6; A frock to dress meal in £0-2-3; 38 Cheque Aprons £1-13-10 1/2; 81 shifts £5-6-5 1/2; 21 pair of hose & mending £1-0-3; 5 pair of bodics & altering £0-13-6; Gowns & petticoats £14-11-5 3/4 ; 16 pair of hose & mending £2-0-7 1/2 ; thread tapes & bindings £1-1-4	28-5-3¼
Charges for Medicine	0-4-0½
Borrow'd upon interest £10 p[aid] half a year's interest due ye 5 of June 1713	0-5-0
Detriments & charge in selling the work	0-9-1
405 (li) Jarsey for ye Children to spin	21-16-10
	111-6-11¼

Per contra Creditor	£-s-d
Subscriptions for ye year due at Midsum'r 1713	34-9-2
Gifts given not subscribed	5-2-5
In my hand of the Rev'd Mr Sharpes ¾ subscription due in Mr Quinton's time of Steward	0-15-0
Received Fardon Rent due at Mich' 1712	5-7-0
Rec'd for bran & dung	0-3-9
For the Children's Spinning & work	
-For Mr Welch & others	8-17-0½
-Yarn sold to Cooper & Mr Malkin	12-1-9½
-Made use for ye Children's Cloathing	2-5-0
-Spinning making Wheel bands	0-0-7
-Making 4 shifts	0-1-4
Total	23-5-9

Besides these earnings of the Children they have made up these following particular vizt 68 nightcaps, 22 day caps, 20 bands, 36 handkerchiefs, 38 cheque aprons, 81 shifts, 40 peticoats which if they had been put out wou'd have cost making up £2-8s-3d	
	69-3-1
Rec'd for Jersey without ye spinning	
Us'd in making up ye Children's cloathing	
73 ½ of Jersey at 13 (p li) £3-19-7½; Sold to Cooper & Malking 137 li at 13 (per cent) £7-8-8; 117 li at 1d 4 (per cent) to Mr Malkin £6-16-6; 1 li made use of for Wheel bands £0-1-1	18-5-10½
24 June, Rec'd for Alice Harwood's board 25 weeks at 12d per week	1-5-0
Rec'd collection for 16 Children	12-1-0
24 June 1713 due to Havey Sparkes steward to balance to this day Tenn pounds Eleven shillings 11¾	10-11-11¾
September 1st 1713 Examined & Allow'd the precedent Accompts	
Signed by Ed: Bowerman vicar, Charles Sheppard, J Troutbeck, J Eales, Wm Underwood, (Tho) Reynolds, James Agutter, Richard Fisher, Timbs Maxey, (Tim') Taylor.	

An indication the level of literacy at the time comes from the parish registers. A new style marriage register was introduced in England in 1754 in which both bride and groom had to sign or put their mark if they could not write. In all the marriages conducted from 1754 to 1760, sixty-two per cent of men could sign their name compared to thirty-four per cent of women. Often, neither bride nor groom could sign. This gives a little insight into the efforts put into teaching writing in the first half of the eighteenth century and suggests that boys received more attention than girls.

The burial register records that a Mrs Freeman, widow, 'late schoolmistress', died in 1757. Whether she had any connection to John Freeman or to Freeman's School is unclear. Around 1756 the school was kept by William Makeham and his wife followed by Alice Rippener then Susanna Gray Trench until it was demolished and rebuilt[174]. Joseph Croxon 'master of the Charity School' died in 1763. Eliza Scroxson, presumably his wife, was schoolmistress until age and infirmity caught up with her in 1777. The income from the charity estate was sufficient to raise the number of poor children attending to twenty-five in 1777. Income in 1800 from rental of the school estate was £117-5-0 of which £100 was from renting fifty-three acres. In 1804 the Schoolmistress's salary was raised to twenty-five pounds a year.

For forty years or more it had been a lace school when in 1812 it was taken down for rebuilding another school on the same plot. Miss Trench took girls to church on Sundays and girls stayed at the school for five years. However, many of their parents said that they made little progress in lace making or in reading while they were there and this school was discontinued after the premises were pulled down. Francis Gibbons, builder, said in 1813 that he knew the girls' school and was often asked to examine and repair it but it was so ancient that repairs were difficult or impossible. There was a school room 16'x14', a Matron's room 16'x14', a wash house 14'x12', a pantry and scullery 10'x8' with three sleeping rooms above them but they had unsafe timbers and props holding up the roof. The walls bulged, the wood was worm eaten and the chimney sent smoke into the thatch. Two adjacent tenements were also decayed and in March 1812 a plan for a new school was produced and Gibbons agreed to build new premises on the same site.

For £420 he erected a new building with an entrance six feet wide, a school room 16'x14', Matron's room 16'x14', kitchen 13'x10' and a 13'x10' room for coal plus two sleeping rooms 16'x14'. The walls surrounding the plot were also rebuilt for an additional £70. At the time of the Master's report (about 1816) the property belonging to Freeman's charity consisted of new premises in the West End built on the site of the premises left in his will.

174 Susannah Gray Trench succeeded Alice Rippener as schoolmistress in 1797 (NRO documents FSW10 and ZA3719).

Printed rules and regulations of Freeman's Charity School dating from 1822 tell us about school management and concern the teaching of reading to boys from five to eight, and reading, sewing and lace making to girls aged six to ten. They were:

- The School hours are 9-12 and 1-4pm.
- Children are required to be punctual, with clean hands and face, hair combed and decently clothed 'as the circumstances of their parents permit'.
- Any child not attending for three successive days without notice will not be readmitted without permission of the governors.
- No child will be admitted who is affected by a disease that will affect other children.
- If the above rules are disregarded by parent or child then the child will be expelled.

In October 1826, Freeman's Charity School received twenty-nine applications some of which were for the second or third time. In November 1826, nine children were admitted, nine in May 1827 and ten in January 1828. In January 1828, thirty-three applications were received and forty-two in May 1828[175,176]. Applicants were aged five to eight years and the records show parents' names and the streets in which they lived. Children came from Salem Lane, Skitterdine, Gibbons Row, Freeman's Lane (now Church St), Buckwell End, Horn Castle and other places.

175 NRO documents FSW34, FSW36 & FSW37.
176 NRO document FSW38.

Freeman's School

In 1828, Freeman's Charity School advertised for a Schoolmistress 'or a man and his wife without incumbrance' as Master and Mistress 'for the instruction of about fifty boys and girls'. A 'liberal salary' was offered along with 'use of an excellent house and garden for the residence' of the Master and Mistress. Applications with testimonials were to be delivered to Mr Sanderson, grocer, or Mr Marriott, draper, the stewards of the charity[177].

In 1849, it was described as a 'good substantial building' but not long after it was rebuilt at a cost of £1,200. The new school building opened in November 1859 on the site of the old school 'in Gothic style in ornamental brickwork' The architect was J. Warren of London and the builder Mr John Boddington of Wellingborough[178]. To supplement income from the charity estate, collections for the school were held in the parish church and enlargements were made in 1870-72 when six hundred children attended[179].

177 *Northampton Mercury*, August 2nd 1828, p. 1.
178 Whellan (1849), p. 901; *Northampton Mercury*, Supplement, 23rd June 1860; 15th March 1859, p. 3; 26th November 1859 p. 4; NRO document FSW57.
179 *Northampton Mercury*, 19th April 1862, p.6.; Palmer & Palmer M. (1972), p. 252.

Numerous prizes were given for attendance, conduct and achievement. Cricket and football teams played against other local schools. Freeman's School was also the venue for a range of social events such as Bible classes and meetings of the various societies in the town.

Who was John Freeman?

John Freeman came from a wealthy local family and became part of the governing class that voluntarily did things to benefit the town and its inhabitants. He mixed with the vicar and parish officers, the overseers of the poor, the town feoffees and other well-connected people. In 1692 he was elected along with Thomas Symonds the elder to collect the rents of town lands[180]. He and Symonds were also collectors in 1698 and 1699 and he was a collector from 1705 to 1707. Rents were used, along with other purposes, to pay the Masters' salaries and to maintain the buildings. He regularly signed the feoffees' accounts book along with others to attest the accuracy of the accounts or to endorse the legitimacy of decisions made. He certainly knew Richard Fisher who left bequests to the Free School and the Charity School as they were both 'subsidymen' in 1696 and had both been involved in town governance for at least twenty-five years. He was made High Sherriff of Northamptonshire in 1709 and signed the feoffees' accounts on the 13th September 1710.

He married Miss Anne Boddington daughter of William Boddington, gentleman, of Turvey at All Hallows in 1700. Anne must have died soon after since in 1703 he was administrator of the possessions of Anne his late wife[181]. He married again to Elizabeth Ashby (born 1684) daughter of George Ashby of Quenby at Hungerton in 1705. His new father-in-law had been the Member of Parliament for Leicester and High Sherriff. The Wellingborough parish register contains baptisms of Elizabeth, Mary and Hannah Freeman daughters of Mr John Freeman in 1706, 1708 and 1709 respectively.

His will was made 24th May 1711 on three large sheets of paper. He bequeathed property in Wellingborough to his wife Elizabeth and he left numerous properties to his three daughters, Elizabeth, Mary and Hannah. Hannah's bequest included an orchard of apples and

180 NRO document ML793, feoffees account book 1673-1716.

181 NRO document BNP16.

cherries located in the West End of the town and located on the east side of the Common Lane that he had lately purchased from his brother Augustine Freeman (deceased). To compensate for a greater bequest to Hannah he also bequeathed £80 to Mary and Elizabeth to be invested and paid to them when they were 21 or when married. To his wife he also bequeathed the jewels and furniture in his mansion house. He also left lands in other counties.

He gave five pounds to the poor of Wellingborough and twenty shillings to the poor of Wilby which was distributed to thirteen people. He bequeathed a house to Thomas Symonds trusting that he has it converted and used for the 'education and instruction of poor children in the principles of the Church of England'. Rents from various lands were to be used for such education. His express will was that the poor children 'constantly attend the prayers and the services' of the Church of England. He added a codicil to his will on 9th June 1711 and was buried in linen on the 28th June, aged about 43. Burial in linen contravened the Burial in Woollen Act which meant that a fine was paid part of which went to the poor of the parish. Wealthy people often chose to be buried in linen, unlike everyone else who did not have much choice in the matter.

John's brother Augustine died in 1706 aged about 36 and he left his dwelling houses in Wellingborough to his 'dear and loving brother John Freeman Esq.' John was baptised in 1668 son of Augustine and Mary Freeman (nee Neale). John's father died in 1679 and left land and buildings in the town to his eldest son John and the inn called the Swan in the Nest or the New Swan to his son Augustine[182].

Augustine (died 1679) was baptised in 1642 the son of Mr John Freeman who seems likely to have been the John Freeman baptised in 1599 the son of Augustine Freeman, yeoman[183] who may in turn have been the son of John Freeman, yeoman, of Wilby who in 1599 left several bequests to his various children and grandchildren but his lands were bequeathed to his wife Eme and his son Augustine.

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182 The Swan and Nest was somewhere near the junction of what are now Mill Road and Cannon St. There was also a Swan in what is now Silver St – which may have been the High St referred to in 1558.

183 Augustine probably owned the Katherine Wheel and various houses in Wellingborough (NRO document YZ5851). In 1765 the Catherine Wheel was in Market St and had stables and gardens.

John Freeman of Wilby is mentioned in the will of John Freeman of Wellingborough who died in 1558 although the relationship between them is unclear. John (died 1558) and Elizabeth his wife had several children and owned several properties including a house in the High Street called the 'Swane' which had a 'great barn' attached to it, a house in the marketplace, and a house and lands in the West End. John (died 1558) must have died young since his will mentions his father Richard who must have been born around 1500.

In short, John Freeman was a local man born into a wealthy family who lost his father when he was young. His first wife died soon after they married but he had three daughters with his second wife. He was active until shortly before he died aged 43 suggesting that whatever took him did so within a year.

Life in charity schools

An account of Charity Schools published in 1713 noted that at Wellingborough there was, "A School for 40 children, mostly girls to be clothed, taught to work and maintained. This School was encouraged by the late Lord Brook". Schools at Finedon and Irthlingborough were described in a survey of 1732 and perhaps show what life in the Wellingborough charity school was like[184].

Findon alias Thingdon

Twenty girls are set to work, taught and homed as follows. Sixteen are employed spinning Jersey at which they earn weekly £1/4s. The other four girls, who are called Housewifes, take their turns in doing the work in the family; whilst the others learn all sorts of work to fit them for service such as spinning linen, knitting gloves and stockings, sewing, marking and mending all their clothes, both linen and woollen. All the Housewifes help to wash; but she, whose turn it is to be Maid, brews, milks, gets their diet &c. but is overlooked by the Mistress or Dame, to see it is done properly.

The girls earn about £60 a year towards their maintenance, besides spinning their own linen, knitting their own stockings, and every other year spinning their woollen clothes, which, being made of strong serge, last them for two years. As to their learning to read, the

184 *An Account of Several Work-Houses ...and also of Several Charity-Schools for Promoting Work and Labour.*

Mistress teaches three of them at a time and they are called out of the spinning-room to read for as long as she thinks proper; and then three others come out until they are all heard, every morning and afternoon. The Housewifes also read a chapter morning and afternoon.

The girls read also the chapters and psalms appointed for the evening service, after supper, verse by verse, as they sit around the table; but not so after breakfast because they read them for the morning at church. The girls take it by turns to say prayers in the morning and evening, which every one of them learns without a book; and they also by turns say grace at their meals.

Sundays and other Holy days mostly are spent in reading the *Bible* and *Whole Duty of Man*, and other books printed chiefly for the use of Charity Schools. They are taught to sing Psalms which they practice at their wheels. The four Housewifes are taught to write and do accounts which they do very well. When they are sent out to service, four others are chosen out of the spinning-room to succeed them. These girls go to church every day and when past 16 they go to the monthly Sacrament. They commonly stay till 17 when they go to service.

All of them as soon as they can read will carry a New Testament and Common-Prayer Book to church but none has a Bible given them until they can say Our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount, and the Exposition of the Church Catechism perfectly without looking at a book.

The provisions for supporting this School seldom exceed weekly one bushel of wheat for bread, pudding and dumplings for dinner Monday, Wednesday and Friday, one Quart of frumetty wheat for frumetty, two bushels of barley for brewing, three quarts of peas for peas porridge for Wednesday dinner, 22 pounds of meat for meat and broth, Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, 10 pounds of new milk cheese for suppers every evening. From Michaelmas to May Day, they have hot breakfasts of their own dressing. At Christmas they learn to make minced pies and at other time cheesecakes and apple pies, as the season of the year affords the materials for them. Their own dairy supplies them plentifully with milk and butter a good part of the year and leads them to understand Housewifry.

The former charity school at Finedon built in 1712. Image courtesy of Finedon Local History Society.

Irthlingborough

At Irthlingborough the 'Working Charity School' took more than sixty children under the care of a Mistress assisted by her husband and 'about forty other children of substantial parents who pay for the instruction of their children.' The school began about 1705 with children taught to read and with the Mistress taking the profits of their labour for her own upkeep. Generous donors gave money such that the Mistress did not have to take money from the children's earnings except for one penny a week until the spinning wheel and reel were paid for and which they kept when they left. Deductions were also made when children needed clothing.

Children earned between one shilling and half a crown a week and in the summer attended from five or six in the morning to eight or nine at night. In 1715 through charity a house was built that took fifty-six spinning wheels designed so that the Mistress could see both floors at the same time. A charity box at the door was emptied annually and the contents distributed among the children. Farmers allowed the children into the bean fields after harvest to gather stubble for winter fires. The children learned the Catechism, the Common Prayer, the Collects for the Day, the Bible and by charity they were given Bibles and other books.

Workhouse children

Education was offered to workhouse children as Luke Knight was appointed as schoolmaster there in 1847 and at that time any Master or Mistress had to belong to the Church of England. In 1861, about sixty children in the Union workhouse were treated to tea by the Master and Mistress and afterwards played games in an adjacent field. A Master was dismissed for gross misconduct in 1877 and the Guardians in seeking a replacement looked for a man of 'strong character' as the boys were 'poorly disciplined'. In 1882, the Board of Guardians wanted the workhouse children to be educated outside but was told that the schools in the town were full. The Guardians resolved to pursue the matter with school mangers and there was a proposal to divide the workhouse children between Board schools (Park Street and Broad Green) and All Saints. However, many parents threatened to remove their children if this happened. It seems clear that schools in the town did not want workhouse children because of the workhouse 'taint'. In September 1882, however, children from the Union started attending Board schools and All Saints with the Union paying the standard rate of three pence for the first child in a family and two pence for the second[185].

Although conditions were very hard for many in past times there was also charity. Parishes supported their poor up to a point and removed poor people from elsewhere back to where they were legally settled. Many of the wealthier inhabitants freely gave over some of their wealth or services. So long as children behaved themselves and took their religion and their learning seriously, they were looked after.

185 *Northampton Mercury*, 21st July 1849 p.3; 13th July 1861 p. 6; 8th July 1882 p. 7; 5th August 1882 p. 7; 2nd September 1882.

CHAPTER 10

HEALTH AND IMPROVEMENTS

Population growth

About a thousand years ago the total population was perhaps around two hundred rising to around six hundred or more in the fourteenth century. The Black Death in 1348 / 9 must have reduced the population severely and may have suppressed it for several decades. The population then grew to about 2,500 in the mid seventeenth century. The hearth tax of 1674 shows 508 houses. Morton's *Natural History* tells us that there were 'six hundred families or more'. John Bridges in 1712 described Wellingborough as a 'large populous town reclining on the side of a hill' and noted that there were 'above seven hundred families'.

Allowing for a typical family size, Bridges' estimate puts the population at around 3,150 or more. Population growth may have been halted following the fire of 1738 which affected hundreds of families with many families losing their livelihoods. Many could have moved away causing a population decline and increased poverty in the 1740s. At the time of enclosure in 1768 the population was estimated at 2,500 to 3,000[186]. This is consistent with the 456 men aged 18-45 listed as eligible for service in the militia in 1777. A surgeon claimed that 2,857 people lived in the town in or about 1790 which fits well with the first accurate population census in 1801 of 3,325.

Population growth accelerated in the nineteenth century. By 1861 the town had nearly doubled to 6,382 people and more than doubled again in the next twenty years to 13,794 in 1881 climbing to 18,419 in 1901. Various population estimates are shown in Appendix 1.

Mortality

In the late 1500s and early 1600s about forty burials a year took place at All Hallows. In 1590 however, eighty people were buried compared to thirty-five the year before and thirty-eight the year after.

186 Palmer and Palmer (1972). *A History of Wellingborough*.

There was another burial spike in 1598 when sixty-nine people died. Other years when burials were above average were 1621-23, 1631, 1637-38, 1654 and 1658-59. The worst year was 1642 which saw 102 burials and was also the year the town was occupied by Parliament troops. However, most burials took place in the summer before the violence so they seem to have been from some other cause. There was always some random fluctuation in the number of deaths in a parish but sharp increases often signal underlying changes such as diseases like influenza or smallpox, or bad harvests.

Other Northamptonshire parishes where the registers survive from 1538, when they were introduced in England, show much larger than average burial numbers in 1546 which followed a bad harvest the previous year. In the mid 1550s, mortality increased in the county and nationally through a probable influenza epidemic that followed two dreadful harvests[187]. The burial spike seen at Wellingborough in 1598 most likely was caused by bad harvests in 1596 and 1597.

Of those buried at All Hallows in 1642, 23% were men, 21% women, 23% male children and 33% female children, where children in this case probably includes anyone below teenage years. The proportion of child burials was high but not abnormal. In 1600, the proportion of child burials was 29%, in 1700 51%, in 1800 42% and in 1900 35% were under eighteen. Infant and child mortality were high and it was normal for couples to lose at least one child. In 1868, William and Sarah Crane of Dyers' End lost three children aged under seven to diphtheria within ten days of each other and a fourth died shortly afterwards. They had six children baptised in the 1860s but none were with their parents on the 1871 census. To help parents with the costs of having three or more live children at one birth a 'Queen's Bounty' was introduced by Queen Victoria. In 1887, Mr Abner Harrison of Mill Road was given three pounds by the vicar of All Saints as his wife had delivered triplets. Within a few days they had all died. Mrs Percival of Gas Cottages in London Road got three pounds for triplets born on New Year's Day in 1901.

Another mortality peak occurred in 1777 when 154 people were buried compared to eighty-two the year before and sixty-two the year after. Most of the burials between the end of April and the end of

187 Swailes, S. (2018). Rural parish registers from sixteenth century Northamptonshire: How good are they? *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, No. 71, pp.7-16.

August are marked in the register with an 'X' denoting smallpox. Of the eighty-six people that died of smallpox, fifty-five were children. Miles Hensman lost his wife followed by a son and a daughter, all in July. In November, the *Northampton Mercury* carried the notice that the Minister, Overseers of the Poor, churchwardens and other principal inhabitants testified that the epidemic was over and no-one in the town was 'ill of that distemper'. Presumably people had been giving it a wide berth that summer. Adverts for jobs were short and matter of fact in those days, and one in 1777 ran, 'Wanted immediately, a journeyman tanner. Good wages will be given to one that has had the small-pox and is a good workman'[188]. Smallpox came again in 1861 and in May 1902 but its effects were much less due to vaccination.

For the most part, the parish registers do not give much additional information over and above names and dates of events. Occasionally, a person's occupation or cause of death is given. Unusually though, age at death is given for 1800 and the average burial age of adult men was 55.4 years (range 22-94) and 52.0 years for women (range 18-84). A lot of people lived to old age but the chances of not reaching it were much higher. For those who survived childhood, women carried the risk of death in childbirth or soon after. Men were more likely to die in work-related accidents.

Remedies

Doctors were available and in 1743 the *Mercury* advertised that 'Bagge Allen late of London, surgeon and bonesetter now lives on the Corn Hill in Wellingborough. Attends every Friday at the George Inn in Kettering'. Medicine though was in its infancy but people were keen to try all sorts of remedies for their various ailments. Some of these were advertised locally:

Vegetable drops available for scorbutic and venereal foulness are in bottles of 11/6d, 5/- and 2/6d and are earnestly recommended to all who think themselves not thoroughly cleansed before they enter into the marriage state. Available from Mr Edge, chemist, at his shop on market days.

188 *Northampton Mercury*, 7th July 1777.

Mrs Lucy is selling Mr Henry Smith's (of Oundle) Tincture of the Bark, two spoonfuls in a glass of mulled wine recommended. 3s 6d a bottle. (1760)

Swinsen's Ointment for the Itch, being a safe, pleasant and infallible cure for this troublesome disorder. Swinsen's purging sugar cakes and improved medicine to destroy worms in children or grown people. These cakes are the properest physic to be taken after the measles or smallpox or other disorders that require purging. Thirteen cakes in a box. Price 1s 1½ d (1795)

Worm Tea – for the destruction of worms in men, women and children established for upwards of 30 years. Does not contain mercury nor does it require confinement to the house. Available from Mather's, price 1s 1½ d.

Dr Fothergill's Female Pills to restore the functions of female health so as to enable them to perform the Offices which peculiarly belong to them. From puberty to old age they will prevent much pain and distress and prevent the attack of the various nervous and hysteric symptoms. Available from Mather, Wellingborough (1809).

Local government

Before councils were invented, the more well-off and well-placed residents sorted things out on behalf of everyone else. They included the vicar and churchwardens, the overseers of the poor, the bridge reeves who maintained the highways, the grass dealers who let the town lands, and others who could contribute their time and charity. They set the rates at which landowners contributed a local tax that was used for the upkeep of the town and collected the rents. Men, usually, rotated among the roles and responsibilities year on year and it was a bit of a 'closed-shop' and doubtless certain self-interests were at play. Whether that was a bad thing though is questionable.

The churchwarden's accounts for 1676 include the constables' accounts as shown below.

The Accompte of Thomas Dexter and Richard Barnes Constables for the yeare 1676 last past as followeth vizt

Received of Mr Thomas Hensman and Mr William Baw Collectors of the Towne Land	£12-07-00
Land Rents by warrant of the next collectors	£2-13-00
Rec'd of James Rock and Dinnis Harrison the late Constables	£1-10-06
Rec'd in all	£16-10-06
Layd out and payd by them as followeth	
Impr[imi]s to Samuel Knight for twelve new leather buckets	£2-14-00
It[em] to Benj: Evans for markeing them	5s
It' __ for _six lather peices	18s
It' to John Postle for making them up, finding Rounds & Colouring them	£1-06-00
For carrying them to the Church	6d
It' for eight poles for hookes	13s
It' Jayler money	£3-10-08
It' to Charles Seymor	3s -8d
It' to Thomas Worlidge	1s -6d
Charges in goeing severall tymes to the Justices, payd to them who came with passes and for Hue & Cryes, to Watchmen at the faires and for other necessary Charges in their Office	£4-09-00
In all	£14-10-08
Rem[ains] in their hands	£1-19-10

The buckets referred to in the account were probably for firefighting as were the poles that were used to lift the buckets to tip water onto thatched roofs. In 1677 John Postle was paid for repairing the dungeon and Nath' Brown was paid for repairing the pillory. All expenditure was audited and written-up. The parish books were kept in a locked chest. Some chests had three locks and three keys kept by three different people, as the entry from 1689 shows.

Memorandum that at a publicke meeting of ye Parishioners of Wellingborrow on ye twenty sixt day of December in ye yeare of our Lord 1689 the Towne Chest was then opened to enter ye Accounts of John Ellington & Thomas Symonds Brig reeves in ye presence of us whose names are written underneath & James Harriott senior brought a key & opened ye first lock of ye said chest & at ye same time the Towne Bookes with deeds & other writings of ye Towne concerned were removed from the vestery into a chest over ye church porch provided for that use.

Feoffees: Ri' Fisher, Ric' Dennett, John Freeman, Rich'd Walker, Charles Seymor, Tho' Simonds, Tho: Dexter

Constables: William Hensman, Samuell Richardson. Churchwarden: Richard Fisher
And we alsoe were present & consented & agreed for ye placing of above said books & other writings in ye said chest over the south porch: Henry Hensman junior, Tho: Worlidge Feoffees. John Ellington brigreeve

In relatively small towns this approach to local affairs was manageable, but as the population grew and the civilising process took its course then more structured ways of local administration were needed. The Local Government Act of 1894 introduced elected councils for districts and parishes. This prompted one 'A. Ratepayer' to write to the paper claiming that this was a great step forward and that no town would benefit more than Wellingborough. The reason put forward was that soon after the Local Board was created it had only had nine members and that the voting system perpetuated 'a pocket borough for two or three families and their parasites.' It seems that A. Ratepayer at least was pleased with greater democracy and looked forward to seeing the old officials removed from their posts[189].

Water supply

Clean water was a constant concern in a growing town and in the 1860s a proposal was made to form a company that would pipe water directly to houses. A shaft was to be sunk in Littler's brickyard and storage tanks erected. The minimum charge would be two

189 *Northampton Mercury*, 27th July 1894, p.3

pence a week for a cottage, rising with the rental value of the house and the facilities it had. Strangely, the local Board of Health was not in favour of the proposal although not entirely against it. This might have had something to do with Mr Dulley being influential on the Board and having interests in the water supply because of his interests in a brewery which used a lot of water. In favour of the proposal, residents had to fetch water from wells like Buckwell and the Angel hotel, for instance, had to fetch water from the town pump. The pump was probably in front of the Hind since in 1638 the town paid £6-2-7d to make a well and pump at the market cross and in 1653 the town paid for water to be taken from Buckwell to the cross well[190]. If a main source like Buckwell ran dry, then there would be serious shortages.

Many old open cess pits had been covered to make water closets but there was no piped water. Sewage was not draining in some places. By 1863 the installation of pipes to carry sewerage had diverted the streams that fed the wells such that some had dried up. The central area and east side were the worst affected. The water supply problem persisted as the town continued to grow but new mains were laid and land was purchased for sewage treatment. A Bill for supplying Wellingborough and Irchester was published in 1868 setting-out that water should be obtained by sinking wells in a field on the Harrowden road and the waterworks were built where The Crescent off Gleneagles Drive is now. A reservoir was to be built in Pikehill Close and a main pipe was to go from the field near the Harrowden road to the reservoir. Another main pipe was then to run to and terminate at Hatton Garden.

Water rates were proportional to the rental value of a property but not less than two pence a week. For every water closet above one the rates increased by five shillings a year and for every bath ten shillings a year[191]. There were other rules though and in 1875 one Mr Pettit of Herriott's Lane sub-let a cottage and supplied the people in it with water from the house that he rented. This was not allowed and he was liable to a penalty of five pounds. Pettit was summoned to attend a meeting of the Board.

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190 Cole, pp.151-2.

191 *Northampton Mercury*, January 18th 1868, p.6

In 1874, Mr Askham surveyed the water supply for the Board and found that 1,089 houses got water from pumps and wells and not from the Waterworks[192]. Out of those, 444 were deemed as not having a sufficient supply of which thirty-seven had no right to water anywhere and had to get it how they could. There were forty draw wells in the town but some were impure and some pumps were broken. The biggest problems occurred in St John Street, Jackson's Lane, Gold Street and in parts of other streets on the west and east sides. These were the worst places, but the problem was widespread. Without the Buckwell in the west, the 'jetty' well in the east, and the Old Farmyard well in Salem Lane the situation would be worse. All three were under great pressure and failure of any one of them would be a disaster. Mr Askham reported that a housewife had told him that she could not get enough water for 'common decency' and another said she could not get more than a bucketful a day. In 1875 after an outbreak of gastric and typhoid fever two wells in Knight Street and one in Strode Road were found to be contaminated most likely with sewage. The Board of Health ordered them to be closed and town water laid on.

By 1883, the Medical Officer reported that water supplies were good, albeit not very clear, and that sewage was being taken a long way out of the town. He was concerned about slaughterhouses in the town and wanted them moved outside. As the town supply increased the old wells were covered up and forgotten about. Over time, this led to accidents as people fell into them. In 1890, two-year-old Harry Stafford Dover wandered into the vegetable garden in front of Mr Gascoigne's house in Knight Street and perished after falling through a celery patch into a disused well forty feet deep. Some planks had been placed over the well in the past but they had rotted and the occupier of the house who had planted over them said that he did not know the well was there[193]. This might have been one of the wells covered-up in 1875. The neighbourhood was very distressed that the top of the well had not been properly arched.

Other improvements

The Board also managed other things like street cleaning, lamp lighting and the watchmen. The watchmen were on duty from nine at night to six in the morning in the winter months. In 1866 it decided that fireworks in the streets on Guy Fawkes Day were a dangerous

192 *Northampton Mercury*, 15th August 1874, p.7

193 *Northampton Mercury*, 21st November 1890, p.7

nuisance and so a fire was built on the recreation ground. The Board took an interest in properties deemed in a dangerous state if the owners would not act. It applied to have a dangerous tenement in Salem Lane taken down, for instance.

Bathing

Several people drowned in Swanspool and the Board was requested to improve safety there and after a child drowned in the Nene the Board was asked to provide a safer bathing place. Whether it ever did is unclear but the unsafe state of the footpath near Turnell's Mill was a regular problem. Swanspool, which at one time was an open pond, was a regular source of nuisance being polluted and silting up. The road for strangers down Sheep Street was dangerous on a dark night and two gentlemen walking arm-in-arm on their way to the station walked into the water and floundered in the mud but eventually got out minus their hats.[194]

Swanspool showing line of brook and the former pond

The Board was keen to provide a bathing place and new spot just below the overshot of Mr Page's mill on the Ise at the bottom of Mill Road was commissioned in 1886. It was to have a concrete

194 *Northampton Mercury*, 14th May 1864, p.7

bottom with steps and sheds for changing. In 1887 the Board leased the spot from Mr Page for twenty years but it could be seen by people travelling by train who found it objectionable. Tree planting and a hoarding were suggested remedies. People also routinely used the towing path on the Nene near the bridge often with fatal consequences and the location of a safer bathing place on the Nene was often discussed. Life buoys were placed at Turnell's mill and near the railway bridge over the river in 1904.

Vaccination

Parents were summoned under the Vaccination Act and fined if they did not have their children vaccinated. An outbreak of measles closed schools in 1886. In 1871 and 1893 some children died in outbreaks of scarlet fever. Diptheria and typhoid were also reported and poor drainage was thought to be a cause so better disinfection of the drains was called for. Some people were opposed to vaccination and in 1902 the Wellingborough Anti-Compulsory Vaccination League was concerned about the large number of prosecutions that were taking place and about fears that vaccination could be harmful. The Vaccination Act of 1898 provided that parents would not be liable to penalties if within four months of the birth of a child they obtain a certificate declaring their conscientious objection to vaccination on the grounds that it would prejudice the health of the child. Two hundred and thirteen such certificates were issued in the Wellingborough Poor Law Union which included surrounding villages in 1899[195]; not many considering the number of families present.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 prompted discussions about how to improve the town and the suggestions included drinking fountains, a cottage hospital, a bathing place, improvements to Broad Green, alms houses for the poor, a public reading room, and a public park in Bassett's Close. To commemorate the Coronation in 1902 Mr James Page offered to present the town with a drinking fountain to be placed on the site of the old town pump outside the front of the Hind Hotel. It would be 14 feet high with three sides and troughs for cattle and dogs. As the town was about to have electric lighting the fountain was to have a light on top of it to illuminate Sheep Street and Silver Street.

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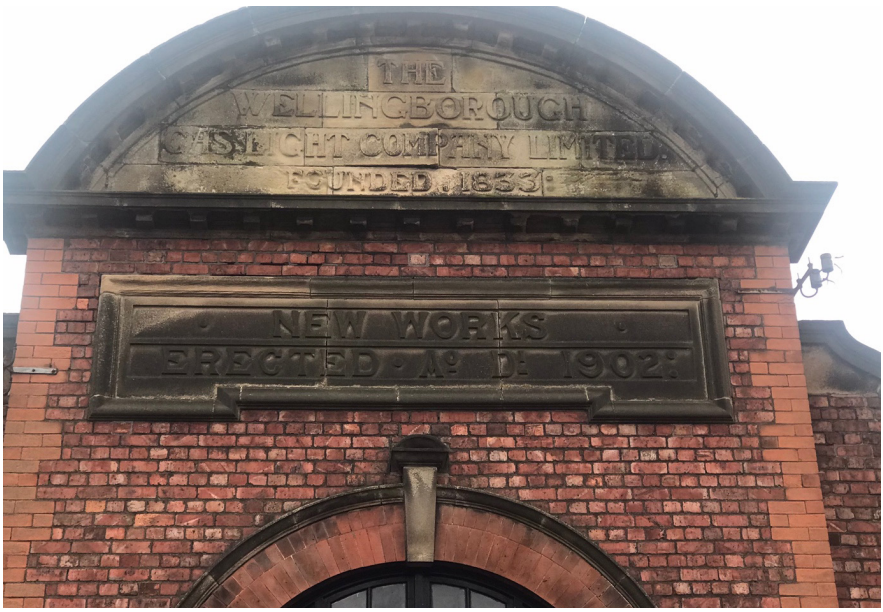
195 *Vaccination: Return to an order of the Honourable the House of Commons*, HMSO, 1900.

Gas

The Wellingborough Gas Light Company was formed in 1833 and gas works were built in Milestone Close on London Road about where it now joins Dennington Road. Gas coal was supplied by a short branch line from the London Road station. Public lighting soon followed. In 1848 one 'A. Burner' wrote to the paper complaining that he was paying ten shillings for a thousand cubic feet. A new gasworks and gasometer were built in 1885 across the railway track at the bottom of Midland Rd. As more houses were connected the price dropped such that in 1884 gas was available at four pence per 100 cubic feet plus one penny a week for the meter[196].



Façade at Nene Court; 'The Wellingborough Gas Light Company Limited Founded 1833. New Works Erected A.D. 1902'

Hospitals

There was a wooden isolation hospital on the Doddington Road for people with infectious diseases maintained for emergency use. It was replaced in 1886 with a new epidemic hospital in a field on the Finedon Road now the site of the current Victoria School. Following an outbreak of smallpox in 1902 another isolation hospital was built

196 Wellingborough Gas Light Co. Ltd: Inauguration of new works, *Journal of Gaslighting*, 1904.

at Spike Island to accommodate sixteen patients. This location, directly east of the railway station, was a little controversial because the people of Irthlingborough questioned whether Wellingborough Urban Council had the right to place the hospital in their parish.
A Cottage Hospital on the Doddington Road was opened in 1900. It was the gift to the town of Miss Mary Woolston (a building cost of about £250,000 in 2019) and built on a site given by Mr W.G. Woolston. Several thousand people attended the opening ceremony. There were two, six-bed wards and an isolation ward. Miss Woolston unlocked the door with a gold key and declared it open. The Marquis of Northampton observed that there was nothing more remarkable than the increasing value put upon human life. Various residents gave money to the hospital.

Cottage hospital on Doddington Road pre-1909

CHAPTER 11

FIRES

Many towns and villages had a serious fire at one time or another. Large parts of Northampton were destroyed in 1675 and the people of Wellingborough gave £4-2-11d for bread to be sent there. A fire burned for twelve hours at Thrapston in 1718 consuming fifty houses with their outbuildings to the value of £10,000. Bozeat had a big fire in 1729. A fire at Finedon in March 1739 claimed sixteen houses and large quantities of corn, hay and farming implements and twenty-six houses and outbuildings were lost at Kettering in July 1744. It was common practice at the time for collections to be made in parishes across the country to provide relief for sufferers of fires and other disasters.

The churchwarden's accounts for 1663 refer to paying for beer for the poor men at Wyman's fire. The accounts also mention a fire at Robert Cox's place in 1663. Six houses in the High Street were lost to fire in 1731.

The fire of 1723

Forty-four houses with contents and outbuildings were consumed by fire at Wellingborough in 1723[197]. The total losses were put at £2,456 and the sufferers were 'reduced to extreme want and poverty.' The names the sufferers of this fire are shown below together with the value of their losses or possibly the amounts that they were recompensed[198].

'An Eastimate of the Buildings Lost and Damaged By fire at Wellinborough ye 30 Apprill 1723'

197 *British Journal*, 25th May 1723.

198 NRO document 350P/87

	Bays	£-s-d		Bays	£-s-d
John Worlidge	9	119-8-0	John Cennel	3	54-15-0
Frances Hensman	2	31-2-0	Wid: Umphry	16	213-8-0
John Padget	5	80-6-6	Tho: Groom	2	27-15-0
Widdow Dickins	27	254-9-0	Em: Dessbry	5	76-16-6
Richard Coales	5	17-10-0	Tho: Bryant	5	74-10-0
Samuell Jackson	13	101-19-0	Richard Tomalin	25	300-12-0
John Edmunds	3	45-7-6	William Coales	3	23-0-0
Tho: Coales	3	14-10-0	William Fincett	9	79-12-6
Mr Sheapard	3	11-10-0	Peeter Coales	8	91-16-6
Widdow Padge	2	19-14-6	Mr Benson	16	140-4-0
Mary Clark	3	23-10-0			

May ye 6th 1723 valued by us; 167 Bays, £1801-17s-6d
Signatures: Will Sutton, John Wyman, John Garrett, The Mark 'X' of Will Brown, Richard Knight, Peter Sanders, Henry Curtis, John Wilson, James Wilson.

Among the worst sufferers (between two hundred and four hundred pounds) were Richard Tomlinson, widow Dickens and widow Humphrey. Four hundred pounds would be worth around £66,000 today. Another document relating to the fire of 1723 lists the losses incurred by individuals. For example, John Brown lost two beds worth five shillings and a 'Table Bofet stool and dresar and a sheet and glass-case' also worth five shillings. Among the losses of Joseph Drage were shirts, blankets, bedsteads, sitting hens, a gown and petticoat, tools, shoes, pattens and clogs, and candlesticks. Mrs Lay's losses were,

Mrs Lays Loss by ye late fire	£-s-d
One bedstead	0-2-3
Another bedstead	0-4-6
A trundle bed worth	0-4-6
3 bed cords	0-2-6
Damage to ye chest of drawers	0-4-0
One feather pillow	0-3-0
One cloth curtain	0-2-0
A good screen	0-10-6
2 chears	0-1-8
A good Reel	0-2-6
A coffer	0-2-6
2 trunks	0-4-0
2 good bibles	0-5-0
Reening fatt	0-8-6
Great barrill	0-8-6
A half hogshead	0-5-0
2 quarter hogsheads	0-9-0
And 4 barrills	0-12-0
A tub and kindel	0-8-0
2 bucketts	0-4-0
For a ladepaill	0-0-10
3 bean stalls	0-6-0
Ye washing Rule tongues and S__e	0-1-6
Eighty six galls of ale	4-6-0
Thirteen galls of small	0-2-2
Loss in brass and pewter and ye copper	2-6-0
Lost in small linen	1-10-0
And loss in cole, wood and turfe	2-0-0
	15-16-5

The fire of 1738

At about 2pm on a Friday in July 1738 a fire broke out in the house of Thomas Curtis next to the Peacock Inn just above the Hind Hotel. Conditions were windy and dry. The fire spread quickly in an easterly direction travelling across the north side of Market Street, across Pebble Lane and into what is now Cambridge Street. Corn growing in fields was cut to create a fire break. It burnt so quickly that people fled their homes without any possessions. In six hours, 220 houses were gone and together with barns, stables and outhouses around 800 buildings were lost mostly in the East and South quarters. Worst affected were the Corn Market, East End, Sheep Street and Hog Hill which were 'laid in ashes'. The total cost of the damage was conservatively put at about £26,000 most of which was not insured. Many tradesmen and farmers lost everything. Hundreds of people were left homeless and facing potential ruin.

Appeals were made to towns and villages across England to ease the suffering of the victims and notices appeared in regional newspapers giving instructions to those who were able to make contributions and giving the names of people entrusted to receive money. The appeals continued for some time afterward such was the extent of the devastation. The people of Northampton sent 300 guineas and Kettering sent 100 guineas. Manchester gave £183, Stockport £37 and Reading £66. The cordwainers (shoemakers) of London gave £57. Mr Philip Ward of Stoke Doyle gave 100 guineas. On hearing of the collection in the village Mr Ward is recorded as observing that all the people of Stoke Doyle were out at the harvest so he donated for himself and for them[199].

A brief sent to the people of Kinver in Staffordshire said that in six hours the fire burnt down 205 dwelling houses in the best and most trading parts of the town along with 806 warehouses, barns and stables plus nineteen houses left standing but miserably shattered and damaged by the flames together with all household goods, stock in trade and stores. The fire spread so fast that people could only escape with their lives; nothing could be saved. The loss of buildings was estimated at £16,090-13s along with £9,896-12s-10d in certified losses of possessions of which only about £2,000 was insured.

199 *Daily Post*, 2nd August 1738 and other contemporary sources.

One hundred and twenty families were 'utterly ruined' and many others badly affected by losses. The brief mentions that the town had previously been 'burdened by numerous poor' and the parish overseers had in previous years paid £500 a year to keep them. The fire doubled the number of the poor[200]. The brief also says that "The misery and desolation of this desperate town is acknowledged by all who have seen the dreadful ruins."

But life had to go on and in August 1738 the *Mercury* reported that 'the Old Swan Inn is left standing with one stable. Good entertainment for all persons and their horses. John Edwards. N.B. He has more stables just at hand'. Richard Stockburn who had lost the Swan and Nest in the fire moved to the White Hart at Kettering. Notice was placed that all sufferers from the fire should appear at the Angel Inn on 31st October to swear their claims upon oath.

On top of the personal losses at the time, we might wonder about the buildings that were lost. What ancient buildings were consumed that might have stood today had the fire not destroyed so much? John Cole remarked a hundred years later that the course of the fire could be seen from the Doddington Road because all the new buildings had a tile roof and the older ones not caught-up in the fire had a thatched roof.

Later fires

Smaller fires continued to occur. In 1767 a fire at the back of the town consumed outhouses, hayricks and cornricks. A farmhouse on Buckwell End and barns on Broad Green burned in 1776 and Craft's brewery was destroyed in 1780. In 1799 Alice Rodick, a widow, died in a fire presumably in her house[201]. The newspaper reported that, 'No person was with her at the time and it is impossible to say how the accident was occasioned. She was a miserable spectacle and quite dead when discovered.'

In 1817 and 1818 there was a spate of incendiary (arson) attacks in various cattle hovels, hayricks and a wheat hovel. A town meeting was called in April 1818 and rewards for information that would lead

200 NN&Q, Vol. I, 1884-5.
201 *Lloyds' Evening Post*, 3rd April 1799.

to the conviction of the fire starters were offered[202]. The town made representations to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent who in the name of His Majesty offered a pardon to anyone giving information except the person or persons who had set the fires.

This case seems to go cold but a letter written by one 'B.B.' in 1834 refers to the incidents[203]. The letter was written to support the case for executing arsonists and mentions the fires at Wellingborough a few years previously. It says that the townsfolk would sit up at night and patrol the streets for their protection and that some families were so terrified they were set to move away. A 'well concerted scheme' was devised and a union of shoemakers was penetrated and one of them was convicted and executed for the crimes. The attacks stopped and B.B. advocated the death penalty for arson as a good way of stopping it arguing that 'imprisonment and transportation are so little dreaded by the brutish part of the population that they commit crimes avowedly to get into prison or to go abroad; but we never hear them declare that they committed a crime in order to get hung.' The identity of the alleged arsonist, however, was not given.

202 *London Gazette,* 14th April 1818.

203 *Morning Chronicle,* 26th May 1834.

CHAPTER 12

WHAT DID IT LOOK LIKE?

When John Leland travelled throughout England around 1540 he wrote in his journal, 'Welingborow is a good quik market toune buldid of stone as almost al the tounes be of Northampton-shire. It stondith about a quarter of a mile from Avon river'. The lands to Oundle and to Northampton were all 'champaine corne and pasture ground, but little wood or none'[204]. Curiously, Leland refers to the river Nene as the Avon several times. Bloome's *Brittannia* of 1677 remarked; 'Wellingborow, pleasantly situated on the ascent of a hill and on the western banks of the Nen, a large and well inhabited town which enjoyeth a good trade, it is beautiful with a fair church and a Free School; and hath a market on Wednesdays which is well served with corn and provisions. The place is of some note for its springs of medicinal water, not far distant from the town.'

In 1712, Morton's *Natural History of Northamptonshire* noted that the town is on the south side of a hill with very fertile meadows and sheltered on the north by orchards and trees. The houses were mainly of red stone and there was no shortage of building materials except wood. It has a well-traded market that had improved greatly over the past seventy years according to the older inhabitants[205]. In 1785 the buildings in the town were described as uniformly being made of reddish-brown ironstone with the same stone used as stone walls in the fields instead of hedges[206].

Street plan, street names, and development

When the town was first described in Domesday Book it is hard to imagine more than a small church and a lane on the line of Sheep Street and Silver Street with buildings belonging to the Abbey on

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204 Toulmin-Smith, L. (1910), The itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543, parts 1 to III, Volume 1, London, Centaur Press; Chandler, J.H. (1998). *John Leland's itinerary: Travels in Tudor England*, Sutton Publishing.

205 Morton, J. (1712). *The Natural History of Northamptonshire,* volume 1, p.25.

206 Scarfe, N. (1995). *Innocent Espionage: The La Rochefoucauld Brothers' Tour of England in 1785*.

the west side. The beginnings of Market Street were probably there assuming that Burystead Place was an access route into the main manor buildings. There was also settlement at the top of the town connected by the modern route of the High Street and there were tracks and lanes leading into the open fields.

Later in the medieval period the route from the bridge over the Nene up to Broad Green catered for increasing traffic. The lane that became Sheep Street and Silver Street became more built-up with tenements fronting either side. There has been a bridge over the Ise on the road to Finedon from medieval times which suggests a route out of town heading northeast. A market was authorised in 1201 which probably increased traffic from the west on or about the line of Oxford Street. Tenements were built fronting the marketplace which was probably nearer the west end of what is now Market Street. By the early fifteenth century the area at the top of the town became more developed with Jackson's Lane running towards houses in Buckwell End, Gold Street running off Broad Green, and St John Street and West Street being in place and fronted by medieval tenements. Buckwell End is mentioned in 1539/40 as being part of the demesne lands of Crowland Abbey[207]. Outlaw Lane appears to date from this time although its name is Victorian.

Herriott's Lane seems to be ancient given its alignment and may have connected the top of the town with the church. The will of Samuel Humphrey made in 1755 mentions 'a certain lane called Harriots Lane' as does the will of Robert Harriott of 1773 who left five pounds to the poor people living in Harriott's Lane. It was also known as Apostle Pond Lane and on a map of 1803 it is Little Silver Street. South of the church on a similar alignment were Pebble Lane and Cheese Lane (so-called by mid 1700s) which may have been the Gyes Lane mentioned in 1549. The fire of 1738 swept across the north side of Market Street and the area was rebuilt soon afterwards. The alignment of Pebble Lane with the main entrance to the church suggests that it has medieval origins. The houses in the 'new' Pebble Lane were small and tightly packed and may have resembled the older tenements destroyed by fire. They were demolished in the 1930s.

This late medieval layout formed the basis of the town for some time thereafter as a map of 1803 shows. Some new lanes and yards were

207 NN&Q, vol. 6, p.161.

created but the envelope stayed the same for a long time. Although some streets are very old, the names they have are mostly modern. Of the old names that survive, Buckwell was so-called by or in the fifteenth century. Broad Green was so-called by 1740 and may have been Brodeland in 1540. Gold Street was named by the mid sixteenth century and possibly earlier as Northampton had 'le goldstrete' by 1330. Burystead was so-called by the early seventeenth century and may have been 'le maner lane' mentioned in 1466/7. St John Street was named by 1555 and was called Rakeler's Lane in 1467/8. How it got the name St John Street is unclear, but the Hospital of Saint John in Northampton founded about 1138 held land in Wellingborough and still held them in 1535[208]. Tenants would have rented the land and it is possible that the land and the street name are linked in some way. The market area is ancient and is 'le Chepyngstede' mentioned in 1330 ('chepying' is an old word for market). John Hackney left forty shillings to repair the paving in the 'market steed' in 1579 and Richard Channer's will of 1587 mentions his two shops in the 'marketplace'.

The High Street is mentioned in 1557 in the will of John Freeman whose house was between the tenement of John Mabott on the east and Robert Hensman of Ecton on the west. This may be 'le Brodestrete' mentioned in the fifteenth century and possibly 'the Common Street' mentioned in the will of Ambrose Marriott in 1736. The will of George Eete of 1658 mentions that he lived near 'Swans Poole' and Sheep Street is mentioned in John Page's will of 1743. Silver Street was so-called by 1803 but how it got its name is unclear. Jackson's Lane, although medieval in origin, took its modern name by 1809. Jackson is an old Wellingborough surname but the source of the street name is unknown. Salem Lane was there by 1803 and was formerly called Wychus or Whitechurch Lane

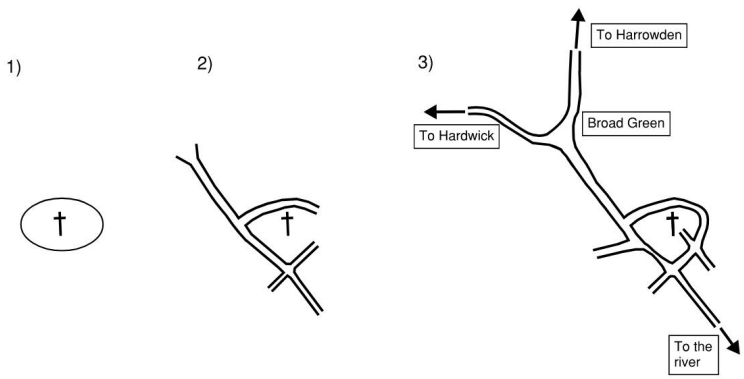
The illustrations below show how Wellingborough's street plan might have developed over time. The holy cross on each plan represents All Hallows church which was in its present location by 1100.

Plan 1) represents the original enclosure created by 600 A.D. Although its exact shape, size and location are not known, it was very likely in the central area of the town and may have been the area now lying in between Market Street to the south and Church

208 Serjeantson, R.M. (1913). *A history of the Hospital of St. John in Northampton*., Northampton: J. Tebbutt.

Street to the north. The church, which came later, is assumed to have been built in or near the original enclosure. Plan 2), around 1000 A.D., assumes the church was in its current location and shows lanes following the course of Sheep Street, Silver Street, Market Street and Burystead Place which was the main entrance to the buildings held by Crowland manor. There may also have been a lane around the north side of the church. People were also living around the area that became Broad Green at this time and it seems likely that there was a well-used track linking the main manor to dwellings at the top of the town.

Town Layout from 600 to 1300

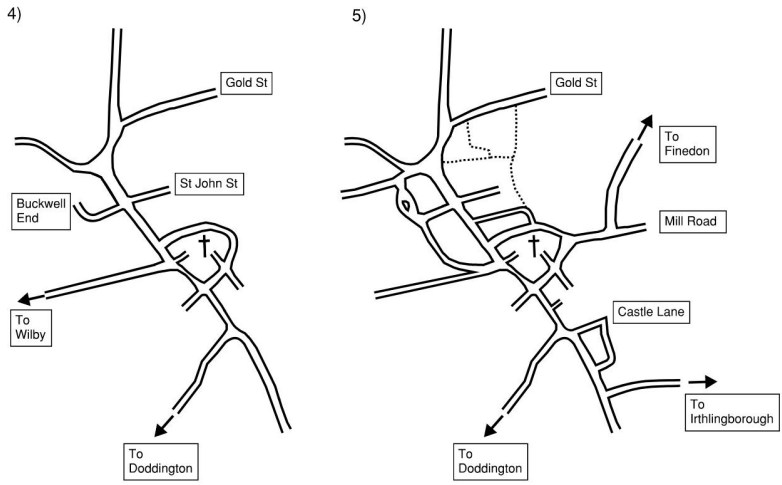


Plan 3), around 1300, shows the church accessed by a lane, now Pebble Lane, and opposite it to the south, was Cheese Lane. A road to and from Wilby and Northampton has opened-up on the route of what is now Oxford Street. A more substantial route north to Broad Green was in place connecting to roads to Hardwick and Harrowden.

In plan 4), around 1500, St John Street, Jackson's Lane and Buckwell End have appeared as has Gold Street which continued as a path to Finedon. The area around Swanspool became more developed. Plan 5) shows development either side of the High Street. Salem Lane connecting to Herriott's Lane has appeared on the east side. Footpaths (dotted lines) connected the top of Herriott's Lane to Gold Street. A lane or path which may have much older origins and which was later called Outlaw Lane ran east from Broad Green. Below Swanspool, a short Castle Road had appeared linking to Castle Lane

along with a road leading to the East mill and to Irthlingborough. The start of Mill Road leading to Little mill is shown although most of it was a track. On the west side, Buckwell End had taken its modern shape and West Street had become more established linking to the road to Wilby, now Oxford Street. A new road, now Brickhill Road, ran from Buckwell End to the brick kilns.

Town Layout in 1500 and 1800

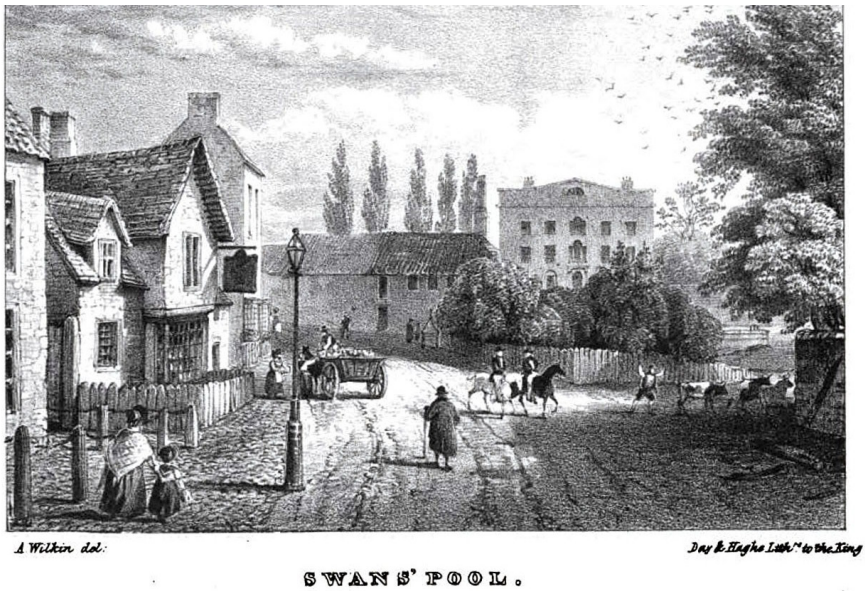


Nineteenth century layout

The earliest complete map of the town made in 1803 shows a road from the bridge over the Nene into the town but there was nothing on it except the Dog and Duck until near to Swanspool. Some large, coursed ironstone houses were built in the eighteenth century on London Rd and still stand on Rose Hill by the Swanspool brook and Castle Lane. On the matter of a castle, there is no documentary or archaeological evidence that there ever was one and nor does a castle fit with the main manor being monastic. The use of Castle as a place name is relatively recent and appears little if at all before 1800, although the field name 'horn castle' occurs in the vicinity in the mid 1700s.

Cole remarked that 'an aged man' remembered a gentleman's house that stood on raised ground behind Rose Cottage on London Road. If so, then this may have had the nickname 'the castle'. There are other examples though of 'castle' being used in fieldnames where no castle has ever existed. Placenames change over time and in one instance, castle in a field name is a modernisation of 'causeway field'. Since there may have been a causeway or similar structure in that area because of the brook this seems another plausible explanation. However, in 1873 the Board of Health was asked to put a seat under trees near Swanspool 'for the accommodation of old folks chiefly out of the Castle.' There were alms houses near the brook and several burials of people living in 'The Castle' or Castle Lane appear in the All Saints register in the 1870s and 1880s. The alms houses may have been nicknamed 'the Castle'.

The map shows that Sheep Street was developed on both sides and had a short lane running east. Silver Street was also built-up on both sides. Turning west into what is now Oxford Street (formerly the West End) there were buildings on both sides for about 300 metres beyond what is now the Coach and Horses pub opposite the bottom of Cow Passage. There was nothing further west except a brick yard, a farm and a toll booth at Morton's Corner where Westfield Road splits from Northampton Road (formerly Kruger's Grave). The lane that is now West Street was there with the chapel and houses and barns on the lower part of West Street that runs into Oxford Street.



Swanspool early nineteenth century. Source, Cole's *History of Wellingborough*

Above Silver Street, the High Street was developed on both sides up to Broad Green except for the land where the Congregational Church now stands which was bare. On the left of the High Street, Jackson's Lane was developed on both sides but there was little beyond the end of the lane. Buckwell End is shown where the bottom of Hardwick Rd is together with some of the ironstone houses and barns that still stand.

The north side of Broad Green shows the Manor House, Hatton Hall and Hatton Gardens which still stand as well as the other side of the Green where the building line is still plain to see in surviving ironstone houses and shops and one remaining small cottage next to the pub. The road to Kettering (now the Harrowden Road) had nothing on it. Both sides of Gold Street were developed for a few hundred metres although buildings were spaced well apart. Gold Street, which at one time formed the northern limit of the town[209], went towards what is now Nest Lane. There was virtually nothing on the south side of Gold Street except for one or two houses.

209 Jarvis, W. (2013). *An archaeological investigation on land adjacent to the Dun Cow public house, Wellingborough*, University of Leicester Archaeological Services.

St John Street was developed on both sides but stopped short of its current junction with Herriott's Lane. Salem Lane is shown but there is no development on it. Herriott's Lane had buildings on both sides. What is now Church Street was built up on the left side going from the High Street but then, as now, the church yard prevented anything being built past the Old Grammar School although there was a building where the vicarage now stands, presumably the former vicarage.

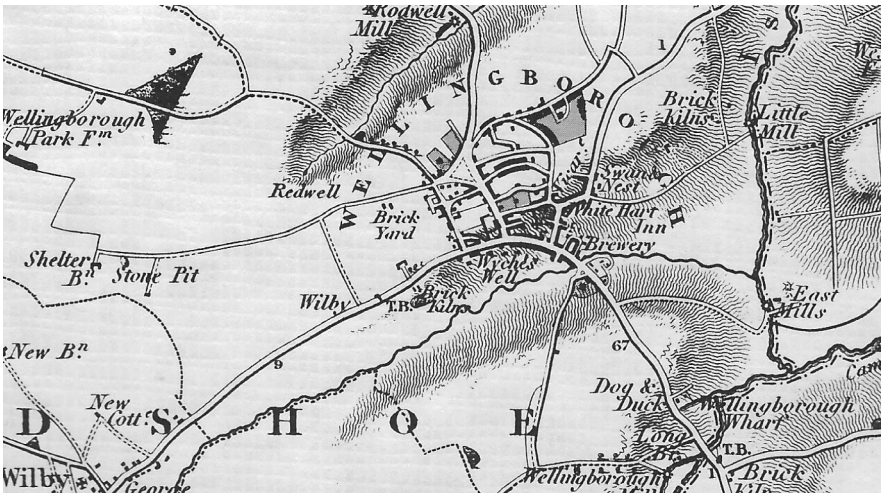
Market Street was also developed on both sides and on Pebble Lane houses and cottages went up close to the south entrance of the parish church. Midland Road did not exist but close to it on the same side lay Cheese Lane with houses and cottages running down a few hundred metres. The market square was much smaller than today and enclosed by buildings occupying the space now cleared where it joins onto Market Street. The church lands ran further south than today touching the backs of properties in Silver Street and the backs of buildings that were at the top of the market square.

Leading off Gloucester Place, Cambridge Street (formerly East End) was developed and some old ironstone buildings remain today. Hooper's Passage and Chequers Lane which it leads to are shown and there were some buildings at the bottom of what is now Cannon Street extending up to about where the Cannon pub is today.

That is pretty much the extent of the old town in 1803. The heart of it lay on Sheep Street and along Market Street. To the northwest there was building around Broad Green, Buckwell End and Gold Street. To the south there were tenements around the bottom of Sheep Street and Swanspool. Tenements also existed on the roads to Northampton (Oxford Street) and to Thrapston (around Gloucester Place) but these did not develop as extensively perhaps because the north-south route saw much more traffic[210].

There were outlying mills on the Ise and on a stream cutting under the road to Harrowden. There were also some outlying farms and lodges. But the town was compact and in 1801 was home to about 3,300 people some living in large houses that are now listed buildings but most living in cottages in the courts, yards, lanes and rows that lay off the town streets.

210 WEUS p.13



Detail from Bryant's map of Northamptonshire, 1824. Courtesy of Finedon Local History Society.

The East End, an old quarter of the town, became Cambridge Street by 1848 although the old name continued to be used. Cannon Street was named by 1849. Skitterdine at the bottom of Church Street could date from late medieval times. The West End is named in the will of Henry Rosse in 1556 and in essence consisted of a short Oxford Street and West Street. Cross Road is old and may be so-called because it was at the crossroads linking Gold Street, Nest Lane and routes to Hemmingwell farm and the East End. Church Street, formerly Freeman's Lane, was named by 1832.

The town expanded fast in the second half of the nineteenth century. Cannon Street with offshoots such as Regent Street, Little Park Street, Furnace Street and Bell Street pushed out towards the railway line. Victoria Road linked Cannon Street to Midland Road. Newcomen, Winstanley, Strode, Ranelagh, Knox and Palk Roads were also started around 1870 on the new Victoria estate. Mill Road was developed along the lane leading to Little Mill. Baker Street and Poplar Street filled in at the bottom of The Avenue.

Park Road linked Gloucester Place to Gold Street and King Street, Box Gardens, Yew Gardens and Holly Gardens were built at the top. It may have been named after 'the Park' which was the name given to the land and gardens attached to The Poplars. St John Street was

extended to join up with Havelock Street. On the west side, Oxford Street extended further outwards to Spring Gardens, Dale Street, Well Street and St Barnabas Street among others.

The Town Hall in Market Hill advertising 'The Fatal Wedding'. Coulbeck & Palmer, auctioneers, valuers and estate agents on the right.

Late Victorian changes

A newspaper report of 1882 gives some more insights into the old town[211]. It says that not long before, Market Street ended at the top of Midland Road with an ivy-covered wall and large gates. What became Midland Road was all gardens and fields. The Rising Sun was next to Mr Page's mill (Little mill) at the bottom of Mill Lane. The whole Victoria estate had been farms and fields. Palk, Knox, Winstanley, Newcomen, Strode and Ranelagh roads had been places where larks sang, children played and hares ran wild. Now they were enclosed back yards and asphalt roads. Mr Woolston's house in the West End had been the last except for a brickyard cottage, the Lodge and the tollhouse. John Askham tells us a little about what a tollhouse might have been like in his sonnet, *The Toll-Gate*.

In the barred window of the old abode,
Where sweet geraniums their perfume shed,
Stands bottled spruce and squares of gingerbread.

211 *Northampton Mercury*, 26th August 1882, p.7.

The Westfield estate was formerly fields. Spring Gardens was previously an allotment ground let at six pence a pole. Cross, Well, Wood, Hill, Dale, St Barnabas and Brook Street West were once tilled and grazed. To the north between Hatton Garden cottages and Great Harrowden was Potato Hall, Kilborn's Mill and the tollgate. Potato Hall was looked upon as some sort of foreign settlement, seldom seen by most inhabitants. Villas dotted the Harrowden Road, Hatton Park Road extended to the Hardwick Road and trees brightened the route. The Promenade, Redwell Road, Hatton Street and Debdale Road although not yet full of houses seem destined to become the most aristocratic part of the town (they got that right). The southern boundary had changed the least but before the New Walk was created old dodderels (rotten trees), unkept hedges, gas tarred fences, ponds and stagnant ditches adorned the route to the station and the old tollgate.

High Street pre-1906. The New Inn advertises Dulley's Ales & Stout. Praeds is just above with the horse and cart outside.

Finding space for animal markets had been a problem for some time and Sheep Street took its name from sheep markets held there (and was called Sheep Street by the early eighteenth century) and Hog Hill (the bottom of Church Street) was presumably so-called because of pig markets held there. Cattle markets were held on Broad Green. A new cattle market on the market square was opened with great ceremony in 1864 but that meant that livestock had to be driven into and out of the town and the square was not big enough. There were lots of accidents with people being knocked over and stalls upset. A bullock hurried an elderly lady twenty to thirty yards up the road leaving her unconscious and then upset a mail cart injuring a small

boy who lost several teeth in the incident. A frightened sheep ran into a pram knocking the baby out. Two bullocks ran through the open door of a restaurant and up the stairs into the dining room to the great distress of the diners.

Finding a new location was not easy because the town's traders wanted to keep it central and the ratepayers did not want the Council to borrow more money to buy new land. Schemes included cutting a road through the churchyard into Church Street, cutting a road through to Gloucester Place, using part of the Recreation Ground, and using some fields on the Finedon Road. The Recreation Ground (Castle Fields) was opposed since it was close to schools and the movement of livestock was considered dangerous to children. Eventually the Dulley enterprise offered Brook Orchard (behind All Saints church) at three and ninepence a square yard and the Council accepted this in 1904[212].

The new Cattle Market, early twentieth century. Hats compulsory?

Broad Green was taken over by the council about 1899 and received a make-over in 1904 such that the ground was levelled and grassed. Railings were placed around it with a privet hedge on the inside. Paths were laid from top to bottom and across from Debdale Road

212 *Northampton Mercury,* 15th October 1864 p.7; 1st June 1900 p.7, 14th November 1902 p.5; 20th November 1903 p.7.

to Outlaw Lane. The Green has probably got a bit smaller over the years as the war memorial took a piece from the bottom and roads either side have encroached on some of the land. Little Green was cut back in 1884 to widen the access to Gold Street. Buckwell Green which lay at the junction of Hardwick Road and Westfield Road was partly lost in the twentieth century. Bassett's Close was improved in 1905 with the addition of paths and iron gates at the entrances.

The town continued to expand in the twentieth century. Outlying farms that were taken by encroachment include Croyland Hall farm near Butterfields, Wellingborough Park Farm which was on Booth Drive on the Park Farm industrial estate, Vicarage farm where Gainsborough Drive meets the Harrowden Road, Breeze Hill farm which was at the bottom of Cherry Avenue, Hemmingwell Lodge which was near Robin Lane, and Wellingborough Lodge which was on Eastfield Road about halfway between Mill Road and Leys Road.

Gloucester Place. The Palace is advertising 'The Five Jovers'. Opposite is Brown's tobacconist and hairdressers.

Appearance

The appearance of the town is described in some detail in the *Northampton Mercury* around 1860 when various improvements were made. The paper reports that before improvements there were 'filthy cesspools, surface drains and manure heaps' in the principal parts of the town[213]. Although landlords objected to the costs of improvements, things had got better. Old, pebbled surfaces that were hard to traverse had been cleaned and were much smoother. The new Midland Road opened-up a lovely view of natural scenery. Public walks were numerous such as the promenade to the Peterborough branch station (on the river). Previously there had been a narrow footway bounded by an ill-kept hedge and a fence that was usually covered in 'gas tar' and it was difficult for people to pass each other without getting tar on their clothing.

Pedestrians picked their way across the Long Bridge over the river through mud in winter and dust in summer. The road to Finedon was similar as there was no proper footway beyond the edge of town and Union Road (now Irthlingborough Rd) was the same. The churchyard had been improved and approaches to the church that were once all pebbled were now smooth.

Despite these improvements, the entrance to Skitterdine at the bottom of Church St needed improving and the causeway there needed widening. The footway at the back of East End was deplorable. The footpath over 'the Plank' (perhaps a plank bridge) needed improving. The path from Midland Road over the brook up to the Union (the workhouse) needed to be gravelled and the plank bridge removed. This might have been the plank bridge over Swanspool brook that led to the East End that was flooded in 1861. A town with six thousand people needed a public recreation ground and one was later located in Castle Fields and later at Hatton Park. Before 1860 good accommodation for the poor was scarce and the poor were huddled together, family by family, in small tenements yet now, the paper says, a respectable cottage can be had 'without much ado'.

The *Mercury* also reported that one of the best improvements in the town was being made by the Board of Health in that part of the town

213 *Northampton Mercury*, 19th March 1864, p. 6.

known as Skitterdine parts of which had been an eyesore for years. Paths were widened by eight or nine feet. What was for so long a dangerous passage where frequent upsets had taken place was set to become a good and safe thoroughfare.

Pebbles

Writing about improvements in 1862, the *Mercury* tells us that the age of pebbles in the town is past, or nearly so[214]. The article says that for generations the townsfolk have been a pebble-punished people. Footpaths, highways and byways were pebbled. Pebbles were at every turning and at every corner stood a gigantic pebble. Pebbles were the missiles used in the town riots of long ago. If windows were smashed then pebbles did it. If the yeomanry fled before the fury of the 'unsoaped' then pebbles accompanied them. Boys played with them and shoemakers hammered on them. Children sat on them and old women heated them and put their feet on them in winter. The *Mercury* was happy to report that many of the offending pebbles had given way to nice smooth pavement but one great pebble evil remained. The old church could not be reached without treading a pebbly path. It was a gem set in pebbles. At last the rough paths are to be made smooth and the approaches to the parish church will be worthy of the temple to which they lead. So, Pebble Lane got its name because it was once laid with pebbles along with a lot of the town centre.

A Saunter through Wellingborough

A lengthy account of the town written in 1862 under the heading 'A saunter through Wellingborough'[215] also gives a good picture of what it was like. It said there was a very pleasant walk from the station on London Road up to Swanspool. On the bridge over the river there was no footway so pedestrians could get hit by an omnibus or wagon as the bridge was narrow. Once across the bridge a tall hedge protected pedestrians from the road and on the other side were green meadows. At the Dog and Duck people walked on the road again for a few yards before re-joining the walk lined on both sides with lime trees; 'Wellingborough has good reason to be proud of this beautiful entrance to the Town.'

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214 *Northampton Mercury*, 19th July 1862, p. 7.

215 *Northampton Mercury*, 2nd August 1862, p. 6 includes sketches of the Golden Lion and the Tudor cottages.

Approaching the town at the cemetery in London Road the aspect is novel and picturesque. The tall chimney at Dulley's brewery blends into the outlook. Going up from Swans' Pool the houses intermingled with trees given an 'agreeable character to the scene'. Just over Swans' Pool brook is the Golden Lion. On entering and turning right there is a low room with a ceiling of black oak and ponderous beams with elaborate mouldings. Across the fireplace is an immense piece of oak which is not in its original position. Upstairs is a Tudor fireplace with an ornament in the spandrills. In the rear of the house are the stables and granaries of the same age.

Nearly opposite the Golden Lion was another house noteworthy not for its antiquity but for its adaption of the Norman style to modern architecture. It was built originally as a factory and afterwards converted into a dwelling house. Further up the street is another picturesque old house - the Tudor house in Sheep Street.

Sheep Street, Tudor cottages bottom left the foundations of which may be a thousand years old. Above them the Bee's Wing and entrance to its stables. Opposite is Lack's shop.

The article goes on to say that Burystead Place above the Hind may be the site of a large house but when the house was pulled down was not known. It suggested that Burystead House, if that

was the same, may have been the residence of Sir Christopher Hatton and near this site stood a Grange belonging to the abbots of Crowland[216]. Referring to Croyland Hall, it had an oak staircase in excellent preservation and some good panelling. Its front faces south and its gardens are bounded by a moat supplied with clean water. It stands on the brow of a hill and its grounds go down to the Swanspool stream. Just above Burystead Place was another old house with a gable towards the street, a couple of centuries old at least. Continuing up to the High Street and Broad Green there was a picturesque jumble of houses of all kinds with a spacious roadway that gives a healthy and agreeable character. Broad Green with the trees of Hatton House was a pleasant place. St John Street was said by Cole in his *History of Wellingborough* to have had an old house with a stone carving traditionally called St John but that had gone and there was nothing there of interest.

In Gold Street there was a house of some pretensions in respect of length of frontage with excellent Tudor doorways and an original oak door in good preservation. In this neighbourhood there are what are called 'Long Lanes', a curious characteristic of the town. They are large tracts of garden intersected by broad lanes fenced in with lofty stone walls covering an indeterminate space between Gold Street and Skitterdine. The article says that this site may have been an ancient part of the town covered with houses and the lanes may indicate old streets, but that was not the case.

In Skitterdine there were old buildings although none of particular interest even though the area was ancient. The article suggested that the name derives from Sceata, an Anglo-Saxon word for a corner or portion, and Dineg meaning new broken land. Skitterdine opened out into Gloucester Place an open space that contributed so much to the health of the town. Previously it was called Hog Hill from the hog fairs and markets held there and the nearby Sow and Pigs public house was no coincidence. Gloucester Place was so-called after the carriage carrying the Duke of Gloucester overturned there shortly after leaving the Hind Hotel.

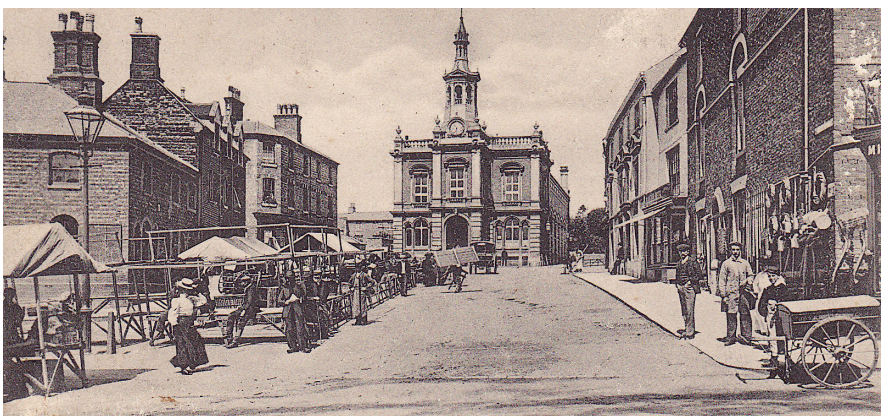
The article says that a curious relic was kept in the vestry, namely a lock of hair dug up many years ago in the church yard. It was about a yard in length when discovered but is now about two feet long. It

216 Orger, J.G. (1864). *Ecclesiologist*, XXV, p.301

is twisted or plaited and was originally black. It was thought to have come from Anglo-Saxon or Norman times when such twisted hair was in fashion. The church was surrounded by buildings. Access to it was chiefly via Pebble Lane and Church Lane. At the west corner of Pebble Lane next to the churchyard was a miniature house with the smallest imaginable upper window that only the smallest head could poke through. It was triangular and projected from the building which was occupied by the sexton. On the north side of the churchyard stands the grammar school built in 1620. Adjoining its west side is a house of the same style occupied by Mr Hodson.

The Corn Exchange had recently been built on a very good site but would be better if the houses on its south front and the row forming the south side of the Market Place between it and Market Street were cleared. When these houses are cleared away Wellingborough will have one of the finest marketplaces in the country. A pleasant walk of about a mile along the Kettering road leads to a mill on the left-hand side. Crossing the stile into the mill field and following the winding stream leads to the once famous Red Well. It is in an arable field lying between the Kettering and Hardwick roads – a spot secluded and picturesque. The spring is strong and the water leaves a red deposit on the stones over which it flows.

The article closes by noting that within the last few years the town has added iron smelting to its other industries which has affected the character of the district.



The Corn Exchange at the top of Market Hill

Market Hill. The Corn Exchange advertises Electric Theatre and Varieties. On the right are Turland's Shipping Agency and the Wellingborough Electricity Supply Co.

The Long Lanes

The long lanes mentioned above were described as a curious characteristic of the town. They were 'large tracts of garden ground intersected by broad lanes, fenced in with lofty old stone walls' that covered the area between Gold Street down to Cambridge Street. The 1803 map of the town shows a lane running north from the top of Herriott's Lane to Gold Street with branches running west (more or less into what is now Alliance terrace and Outlaw Lane) leading to the lower end of Broad Green and to Little Green. At that time, the area south of Gold Street down to Herriott's Lane and Cambridge Street was clear but for lanes and closes. The article floated the idea that the lanes may indicate the tracks of old streets and that this area in the late medieval period was 'part of the town and covered with houses'. This, however, is very unlikely.

The lanes were in fact public walkways connecting the north end of the town with the centre. They may have been ancient footpaths that had been incorporated into the estate attached to The Poplars. In 1864, William Goodman a shoemaker of Gold Street who had gone to get food for his pigs was found dead from natural causes in a lane.

In 1865, William Blott of Wellingborough, corn merchant, applied to register the land and buildings called The Poplars containing about thirty-four acres of land and comprising a mansion house with outbuildings and lands and plantations adjoining Gold Street together with several cottages and gardens, pastureland adjoining Gold Street and the Long Lanes, and several houses, cottages and gardens in or near Herriott's Lane[217].

Reporting on 'An Altered Locality' in 1871, the *Mercury* describes how much the town was changing and none more so than the lands of the late 'Squire Hill'[218]. A few years previously he presided over 'a pretty little park, walled in on all sides, beautifully wooded with elm, beech and chestnut principally with green sward (an area of short grass) rising to the north. One of the chief features in the grounds had been the private walk to the house (The Poplars) known as the Long Lanes. Quaint and curious, and a few yards wide, the main lane extended north to south about a quarter mile. It had a branch lane leading westward with 'high dead walls on either side' that came out in Broad Green (this seems to be Outlaw Lane and sections of the old walls are still standing). The elms and beeches that stood along the length of the main lane had been cut down and sent to auction. Most of the old walls had been pulled down, shrubberies pulled up, and new buildings and roads had taken their place. The article laments the loss of this space formerly inhabited by ghosts and lovers and nightingales. The old coach house and the stables once used by the Squire had been converted into cottages. New streets had been built but 'without causeway or cart road' and the houses were being let at high rents.

Again, in reporting on changes to the town the paper points to 'The Poplars' or the 'Park' as it was sometimes called[219]. It remembers fondly Mr Charles Hill who lived on the estate bounded by grey walls and chestnut trees. Cole's description of the house and the estate of Mr Hill says that the house was built in 1778 and was approached by a curving gravel road that wound through a plantation of Lombardy poplars. By the late 1800s, the estate had become covered with roads and houses, with meddling surveyors, peddling builders, scolding mothers, howling children and growling fathers. Where once there

217 *Northampton Mercury*, 24th December 1864; 19 August 1865.

218 *Northampton Mercury*, 28th January 1871.

219 *Northampton Mercury*, 28th August 1875.

was beauty now sees the Inspector of Nuisances, the School Board Officer asking why children are not being sent to school, and tax and rent collectors knock on doors. 'Never was a place so delivered up to the spirit of change'.

The same romantic spirit is extended to the Hatton estate which the article says in 1869 was 'delivered up to the inhabitants.' After the death of the owner, Quintas Vivian former vicar of Wellingborough in 1841, the estate passed through many hands and lastly into the hands of the auctioneer. Messrs Blott and Woolston purchased the lands only to parcel it off for building and the favourite idea was for villas. On the Victoria estate, the lands were surveyed and 672 lots of building land were put up for sale. Investors came and the estate became home to all sorts of trades. Once it was corn and turnip fields; children rolled down Corrie's Hill (possibly Senwick Rd) and the East End shoemakers held 'field-fuddles' there. The fields that once lay at the top of the High Street gave way to Rock Street, a Board School and buildings in Buckwell End. A much shorter St John's Street had a two-acre field at the bottom once a source of ironstone, sand and clay. The path through it was narrow and dangerous but the field was removed to make a continuous route to Havelock Street. In 1879 more houses were connected to a water supply and fewer wells were sunk. Many old wells had become contaminated. A new road connected Park Street with Cannon Street.

Hatton House facade

CHAPTER 13

LIFE IN THE 18th and 19th CENTURIES

Newspapers carried information of all sorts and the local courts had plenty of customers. The town was full of clubs and societies, not least the Wellingborough Association for the Prosecution of Horse and Sheep Stealers. There were competitions for just about everything with lots of prizes. Baby shows were held at the Granville (Mrs Olney's triplets won in 1885). Churches and chapels had social gatherings and there were many football and cricket clubs by the late 1800s most with a second eleven. Fetes and fairs were enthusiastically reported. Smoking concerts were organized where men gathered to hear patriotic songs and put the world to rights. People were keen to learn. Public lectures on all sorts of things were popular and the Wellingborough Useful Knowledge Society was formed in 1832. Little reason was needed for a procession or parade, often starting at Broad Green and then through the main streets to a field with lots of food. Great fun for children no doubt.

The papers tell us about how people lived, how they enjoyed themselves, what people valued and how people were expected to think and behave. Stories were told with typical British understatement and often carried details that would be suppressed today (much too 'distressing' for us) but they suppressed details that would be revealed today ('unnatural acts'). Some stories are sad, others are amusing. Some examples are summarised below with the tone of the original language retained as much as possible.

Accidents

Serious accidents were commonplace both at home and work. Being hit or run over by a horse and cart was a very common occurrence. In 1770, Elizabeth Perrin a poor woman was carrying a bucket of water through a narrow passage when she was met by a cow being driven to the slaughterhouse which gored her arm in a terrible manner. She was taken to the County hospital where the limb was taken off. This might have been in Cow Passage opposite the Coach and Horses in Oxford Street.

Cow Passage looking towards West St.

In 1807 Charles Matthews a lad employed in carrying mail from Northampton to Higham Ferrers was passing the Wellingborough bridge when he was met in the narrow part of the bridge by a single horse chaise and by some means ran his pony against the point of one of the shafts which struck him in the lower part of the body. He was thrown off and expired on Monday.

In 1820, knowing that His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester would be passing through the town the townsfolk gathered to see him. They took the horses from the carriage and drew it through the streets accompanied by a full band and people waving patriotic flags. The horses were changed at the Hind but the drivers set off too fast and overturned at the 'corner of Eastend St' (the bottom end of Cambridge Street). Hundreds ran to the assistance of HRH and he was extracted through the coach window. No-one was hurt but the carriage was 'dashed to pieces'. After two hours he proceeded on his journey in a new coach[220]. Presumably his coach had left the Hind and gone along Market Street or down Church Street and attempted to turn into Cambridge Street. The story is said to explain how Gloucester Place got its name.

220 *Morning Chronicle*, 5th December 1820.

In 1855 a poor old woman of 80 was crossing Gold Street when the cart of Mr Wallis the butcher going at a furious rate ran over her. Although very much hurt she recovered. The horse with the same fury ran down High Street, freeing itself from the cart and ran down Sheep Street and was captured at Earls Barton. In 1875, William Parrott, a father of ten, was thatching a hayrick at the Poplars when he fell and was killed. Accidents, often fatal, were commonplace on the railways. The worst happened in 1898 when the Midland Express out of St Pancras travelling at sixty miles an hour or more was derailed just north of the platform by a luggage barrow that had fallen onto the line. Men tried to remove it but had to jump clear of the advancing train. The impact was so great that the engine turned through 180 degrees and ended-up facing south. Seven people died as a result and many more were seriously injured.

Crime and punishment

The lower and higher courts had plenty of business. Petty theft and assaults were commonplace. Cruelty to animals, riding without reigns, poaching, begging, drunkenness, using improper weights and measures, and hawking without a licence were also common offences. Short sentences of hard labour were often given. People could be transported or executed for serious crimes.

Capital offences

Most people who were sentenced capital punishment in the eighteenth century had their sentences commuted to gaol or transportation. Executions in Northamptonshire were infrequent and from 1780 to 1834, fifty-eight people were executed at Northampton a rate of about one a year[221]. Of these, three were women all of whom had been convicted of murder. Men were executed for lesser offences. In 1731 John Woodruff, a soldier, was convicted of breaking into the houses of Robert Skeggs and William Watts. He confessed and was executed. He was saying the Lord's Prayer in a loud voice when the cart drew away. In 1782 the house of Mrs Lydia Ware, victualler, was broken into while she was at Divine Service. Taken were thirty guineas, two half guineas, ten crown pieces, forty-one half-crowns, twenty-seven shillings, two silver four-pence pieces, one silver two-pence piece and one silver penny along with a watch chain, silver

221 Dyndor, Z. (2008). Death recorded: Capital punishment and the press in Northampton, 1780-1834, *Midland History*, 33(2), 179-195.

shoe buckles, a snuff box, gold earrings and other things. Henry Hospital of St Ives was tried and capitally convicted of the burglary. The judge, as he left the court, did not reprieve him and he was taken for execution the following Friday.

In 1785, Thomas Mee died from a blow to the head from a threshing flail swung by William Howell, labourer. Howell struck Mee when he had called at the house of his 'amour'. He languished in great agonies for four days then died. Verdict: wilful murder. Howell was capitally convicted and was taken from the County Gaol about 10-11am to execution. His behaviour was decent and asked for the cart to go faster observing the weather was very cold. He acknowledged giving Mee the fatal blow but declared no intention of killing him. After hanging the usual time his body was delivered to surgeons for dissection. Public executions were intended to be a warning to others and as if they were not enough newssheets (broadsides) were commonly printed to accompany them. They warned against engaging in crime and often carried something specific relating to the condemned person. Howell's broadside included the verse[222];

Let better thoughts our minds employ
Let true religion be our guide
Let virtuous minds be all our joy
Nor malice in our breasts reside

In 1788, James Bircham and Daniel Robinson were sentenced to death for breaking into the house of Benjamin Gosley and stealing. Their sentences were later respited during His Majesty's Pleasure. James Martin and John Taylor were sentenced to death for breaking into the house of Samuel Clayton (or Clayson) in 1805 and stealing goods worth two hundred pounds. Clayton was unmarried and lived with his mother and used his house as a shop but the defence queried whether, since he did not live there, the prisoners could be convicted of breaking into a dwelling house. The judge believed it was a dwelling house and sentenced them to death. Later, judges ruled that it could not be considered a dwelling house as under the present owner no-one had ever slept in it[223].

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222 Dyndor (2008)
223 Crown Cases Reserved for Consideration, 1799-1824.

In 1822, William Turner, William Lawson, Thomas Bales and George Luck late of Wellingborough, shoemakers, stood charged on suspicion of having between two and three o'clock in the morning of 30th May aided, abetted and assisted William Meadows, William Gent and Redmond Middleton (now in Northampton gaol) in assaulting, ravishing and carnally knowing by force and against her will Ann Newman between Wellingborough and Wollaston. Whosoever apprehends any of the above men will be handsomely rewarded and paid all reasonable expenses. Turner is 17, about 5′ 5″, fair, long neck, curled hair and was wearing a blue coat and trousers, he walks stooping and talks rather thick. Lawson is 16, about 5′ 2″, dark hair and dark complexion. Bales is 17, about 5′ 3″, light hair, pales and was wearing a fustian coat and trousers. Luck is 19, about 5′ 4″, brown hair and a large head. They were arrested in June, tried in July and Meadows, Gent and Middleton were hanged in August at the New Drop in Northampton Gaol.

Transportation

Transportation involved sending convicted criminals to penal colonies for specific periods of time, often for seven or fourteen years. In practice though, most convicts could not return home but transportation did not always work out badly. Convicts may not have ever seen their families again and life on the prison hulks and on the convict ships must have been grim, but once in Australia well-behaved convicts could be given a conditional pardon quite quickly. This meant that they could resume their trade and, in time, some became respectable citizens. Women were also transported albeit less frequently. They were usually single and had committed minor crimes.

Several people convicted of crimes in the town were transported although sometimes the townsfolk got together to appeal against their sentences. William Tester stole a silver tankard from John Turnall a publican and was transported for seven years. Charles James who was involved in the rape case above was sentenced to death commuted to transportation for life. Ten years later, 228 people petitioned for his early release on the grounds that he was at the time a youth who had been led astray. Michael Perrin got seven years for larceny in 1827 but twenty-four people petitioned unsuccessfully for him. Richard Yeomans, 32, stole a lamb and got transportation for life in 1828. Eighty-four people petitioned for him on the grounds of

his good character, that he was a former soldier, that he had a wife and three children and that he had been persuaded to steal. This appeal may have been successful as there is no matching Australian convict record. Joseph Knight, 27, was convicted of forgery and went for life even though twenty-six people and the vicar pleaded on his behalf. John Harris, 18, was convicted of stealing tools in 1836 and fifty-seven inhabitants pleaded for him based on his youth and that he had been led astray.

William Lawton a shoemaker was sentenced to life transportation for burglary and was sent to Tasmania. His pregnant wife Sarah petitioned to be allowed to go with him as she had no means of supporting herself and would have to fall on the parish for support[224]. They were married at All Hallows in 1815 had had a child Phoebe baptised in 1817. He went on the convict ship *Dromedary* in 1819.

Lesser offences

Some examples of minor offences are given here to show how people were dealt with. A public whipping was not uncommon and in 1774 Ann Swales was imprisoned for fourteen days and whipped twice at Wellingborough for obtaining goods under false pretences. William Glover appeared at the Petty Sessions in 1843 with his son, about eight, and another boy who had been beaten by 'Chater' of the Church School. Mr Dulley the surgeon advised him to seek redress as the vicar and others had not condemned the violence. The Bench was appalled by the brutality which was not justifiable. The boys had laughed in church.

At the Petty Sessions in 1844 two young urchins were charged by the churchwarden, Mr Marriott, with disturbing the congregation during Divine service by introducing a cat to the gallery and shouting, 'Make way for the Pussyite'. Case dismissed. Maybe these urchins were making a play on 'Puseyite' which was a label given to a particular group of religious reformers at the time. If so, they seem particularly well-informed urchins.

In 1846 a young girl appeared before magistrates with two illegitimate children and asked what to do about the third which was on the way. She was told that she should be ashamed of herself and to come again when the baby was born. She left to the suppressed titter of

224 Robinson, P. (1993). *The Women of Botany Bay*, p. 140.

the court. Also in 1846 one 'Bill the Sailor', a good-natured fellow, was fined eight shillings for being drunk and after due calculation in court he equated the amount to ninety-six screws of baccy after which "William gave his unmentionables a desperate and distracted hitch and left the hall." Also at the Petty Sessions, James Tebbett of Earls Barton was charged with being drunk. He argued unsuccessfully, "If I war drunk and know'd I war drunk, then I warn't drunk; but if I war drunk and didn't know I war drunk then I war drunk". Fined five shillings plus costs.

In 1851, John Wesley pleaded guilty to stealing eleven tame fowls from Francis Partridge of Wellingborough. They were stolen in the night and the police found them concealed in his bed. The Bench complemented the police officer on his zeal, and sentenced Wesley to six months imprisonment. In 1856, Sarah Young a girl of respectable appearance living at Irthlingborough charged John Maddison with assaulting her there by roughly seizing her arm and attempting to drag her away from her female companion. Maddison wanted her to walk with him and her arm was sore for some days. Magistrates said it was a disgraceful state of things and must be put a stop to saying, "It appears that insults are general in the village". Fined one pound.

Samuel Fillingham, landlord of the Chequers, was charged with allowing drunkenness in his house. P.C. Clithero went there early one morning in 1858 and found four or five men drunk in the taproom, one of whom lay on the floor. In another parlour he found thirteen or fourteen men all drunk. The landlord abused the constable. Magistrates said disorderly public houses were hot beds of vice and crime and their keepers deserve severe penalties. But as this was not generally the case here a light penalty was imposed as a warning. Fined ten shillings plus costs.

John Watson, 'a queer-looking old man', was charged with assaulting Mary Page an elderly woman in 1858. As Watson was taking his morning walk along the allotment gardens he saw Page with an enormous cabbage and assumed she had stolen it calling her a thief and other vile names. Mrs Page responded in a rage and hit Watson over the head with a cabbage stalk. She had permission to take the cabbage and good-naturedly consented to withdraw her complaint.

Joseph Wilkins of Hardwick was charged by John Saul, the night

watchman, with lying drunk on the pavement in Sheep Street in 1859. Saul said he lifted him up but he could not stand and struck him on the chest. Constable Webster then took him into custody. Their worships said it was a disgraceful way to spend the Sabbath and fined him five shillings plus costs.

In 1864-65 the Wellingborough Union repeatedly advertised a reward of two pounds for the apprehension of Joseph Nutt, shoemaker aged about 36, 5′ 7″, dark brown hair, large whiskers, stoutly built, scar on right thumb and George Nutt his brother, shoemaker, 40, six feet tall, black hair, large whiskers, thin, both arms scarred with burns. Both had absconded leaving their wives chargeable to the parish. George Nutt was given three months hard labour. Charles Parker got one month's hard labour for the same offence in 1861. Joseph Reynolds was summoned for leaving his wife chargeable to the parish in 1870. He pleaded inability due to a disabled arm but produced no certificate to that effect. The porter of the Union produced a pair of shoes made by Reynolds while an inmate and said he could earn twelve shillings a week. He was given a month to find a home and to take his wife out of the workhouse. Thomas Goodman was similarly charged in 1871 and said that he could not live with his wife because of her drunkenness. Nevertheless, he was given two months' hard labour.

Henry May, an itinerant seller of polishing paste 'who looked as if he would have been none the worse for a little of it applied to himself' was charged in 1870 with being drunk and incapable near the Hind Hotel. He was ordered to pay four shillings costs but since he had no money he was locked up for another night then discharged. Israel Ford was fined one pound plus costs for 'furious driving' of a pony and trap down Silver Street in 1884. In 1900, Thomas Worth, a bookmaker, was fined ten pounds plus costs (over £1000 today) for allowing betting in the public street.

Social events

His Majesty's birthday in 1771 was celebrated by four companies of the Militia who made a handsome appearance. Three volleys were fired, the chief constable and all reputable tradesmen met at the public bowling green where many patriotic toasts were given. The evening concluded with a grand procession through the whole town singing God save Great George our King.

A marriage announcement from 1774 boded well for the happy couple; 'At Uppingham, Mr Lewis Bradley farmer and grazier of Wellingborough to Miss Ann Garrett; an accomplish'd young Lady with a genteel Fortune'. Less promising, however, was the marriage in 1790 of John Carver. Carver was a travelling seller of lace who arrived in Stamford and commenced a courtship with a lady. They married the next week and the many guests had a merry time until the evening when news came to the bride that Carver had a wife in Wellingborough. Her parents insisted that the marriage must not be consummated until they were certain that it was legal. A messenger was sent to Wellingborough returning the next day with unpleasant tidings. Carver then absconded leaving his box of lace behind him and the new Mrs Carver almost frantic on the occasion[225].

In 1781 the *Mercury* announced that Dr Bogue has set-out for Kent where his family have been for some time at Ramsgate for the benefit of sea-bathing. He proposes to return with them to his house in Wellingborough in about two to three weeks.

At Christmas 1795 a ball was given at the Hind Inn by Captain Dickins of the Wellingborough Troop of Yeomanry which was 'attended by the whole troop and a very splendid appearance of ladies in the vicinity.' They met about 7pm for tea and coffee, then dancing until midnight. After that they retired to a 'very elegant cold collation' after which 'with the most zealous loyalty' they toasted the king and others. Dancing began again until dawn. In 1799 the Troop met near the mansion of Captain Dickins at Wollaston where they partook of a most handsome and excellent cold collation in tents pitched on the lawn. Many respectable ladies were present. Afterwards, the surplus food was distributed to the poor of the parish with plenty of good ale.

To commemorate the fiftieth year of the king in October 1809 the morning was greeted with the ringing of bells. A handsome subscription had been raised and judiciously distributed to the poor of the town so they could participate in the day's festivities. A very fine ox given by Mr Charles Hill of The Poplars was roasted whole on Broad Green and a considerable quantity of ale was distributed to the population. When the fire was lit 'God save the King' was sung in full chorus. A handsome dinner was provided at the Hind Inn.

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225 *Northampton Mercury*, 25th September 1790, p.1. A John Carver married Sarah Allen at All Hallows in 1781.

For the Royal Jubilee in 1810 an elegant dinner at the White Hart Inn was provided to many respectable inhabitants. After dinner, several loyal toasts were offered and sentiments given. By order of the company, bells were clashed fifty times in honour of the beloved King. The end of the Napoleonic wars was celebrated in 1814. Collections were made for the poor and tables were set-up in Sheep St and Silver St where much of the population dined 'in harmony and good humour'. To celebrate the passing of the Reform Act in 1832 which introduced changes to the electoral system there was a procession through the town. The different trades gathered, doubtless for food and drink, with the agriculturalists assembling in front of the town hall, leather trade workers on Broad Green, lace makers in the Square, blacksmiths, braziers and painters in Market Street, tailors in the High Street, carpenters in Silver Street, masons on Hog Hill and the bakers and others met in the Market Place[226].

The 'far-famed' Beef-steak club met in 1848. Members processed from the corner of Silver Street to the George Inn each carrying their steak. The evening ball was well-attended and beef was distributed the following day to the poor of the parish. It was sent around in a decorated can attended by officers on horseback and the almsgiver handed over plates of beef to people named on a list. In 1849 it

226 Cole, p.155.

became known that Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, would pass through Wellingborough on his way to London and that the train would stop for water. At about seven o'clock large numbers of loyal folks rushed to the station for a glimpse. His Royal Highness lowered the window of his carriage and bowed in the most affable manner. The Prince carried off loads of hearts, for the ladies of Wellingborough described his appearance in the most glowing terms. More than one husband was heard to say, "That's enough of Prince Albert".

Groups of neatly dressed and happy looking children were seen wending their way to the vicarage in August 1849. By two o'clock no less than 800 children and teachers had gathered on the vicarage lawn and processed up the High Street to the park at Hatton Hall where a thousand people met for tea and plum cake. After tea the sports began, the aged forgot their years and the wealthy their riches. At eight o'clock there were fireworks and the ascent of a large fire-balloon which glided towards the town. Great credit to all, especially to the ladies who were indefatigable in their exertions.

In 1863 about 830 children of the Church Sunday Schools sat down to tea. The procession left the vicarage, went along Market Street, Silver Street and Oxford Street into fields where tea was served. After tea there were games and athletics. In the same year members of the Female Benefit Society held their annual tea feast in the Corn Exchange. After tea the 134 members and guests adjourned to the Vicarage gardens 'to amuse themselves' after which there was dancing at the Exchange till ten o'clock. Nearly £200 was paid out the previous year for the benefit of sick members. The Society was founded in 1834 by Mrs Hannah Bearn and had 523 members. It was still going in 1890 with 792 members. The year before, it had paid out £251 in sick pay, £82 for doctors and £33 for funerals and had a healthy set of accounts. There was also a Church Female Benefit Club which in 1873 had 246 members and held its annual festival in Hatton Park to music by the band of the Northants Rifle Volunteers; 'dancing and other amusements were indulged in till dusk' then they all went to Freeman's School for supper.

Wellingborough Agricultural Society 1863: Numerous prizes for animals, shepherding and ploughing etc. and, 'To the unmarried woman who has lived longest without intermission in the house of

a non-agricultural member of this society (not less than four years) – first prize to Hepzibah Neale.

August 1888 was the dullest Bank Holiday on record. There was absolutely nothing in the way of amusement to keep the people in the town as and they were determined to find enjoyment elsewhere they went to Franklin's Gardens and Althorp Park or on excursions to Rhyl, Llandudno, Birmingham and London.

The Post

In the early 1830s the Post Office was in Sheep Street. There was one mail bag, one delivery and one letter carrier. Mail carts with a sword on one side and pistols on the other (painted not actual perhaps) conveyed letters from one post office to another. With no envelopes, letters were written on paper of all sizes and folded. The 'common people' would use a sixpence to make a red wax seal or black if the letter announced a death. Polly Lay the postwoman took the letters around in a gallon basket but she could not read and distributed them 'as fairly as she could'. The next post office was in Gloucester Place and was run by two sisters. After that to Midland Road and thence to Burystead Place where the postmistress was 'crabbed and tetchy'.

The introduction of the penny post called for better arrangements and the Post Office moved to the Market Place in 1859 under Mr Williamson who was presented with fifty guineas from a grateful public upon his retirement. The office moved around some more but with increasing sophistication of the postal service a more suitable building was needed and a purpose-built building was occupied in 1884[227]. It had a large sorting room, a large counter and a desk for writing telegrams, and a postmaster's office. This still stands in Church Street.

In April 1888, people living at the Post Office were awakened by a loud knocking on the door about seven o'clock in the morning. When opened, a young woman named Sarah Maddison ran in demanding to send a telegram. When told that she could not she smashed all the windows and tore off all of her clothing and ran about naked but the officials quickly covered her with blankets. She had slept the night at

227 *Northampton Mercury*, 3rd April 1886.

a friend's house and jumped out a window. She was believed to be suffering from religious mania.

Real estate

Advertisements of properties for sale or rent also show what the town was like. The place names are still used but their character has changed beyond recognition. Jackson's Lane is still there, for instance, but nothing remains of any note but for one old ironstone building. Some of the features long gone, although some buildings may still stand, are described below.

Central area
In 1725 or 1726, there was a 'handsome, convenient and well-built dwelling house of four rooms on a floor and a cellar adjoining the School house with a barn, stable, outhouse and brewhouse, two yards and garden and orchard also three little dwelling houses adjoining thereto to be sold'. Details from Sarah Reynolds being the estate of Robert Reynolds, attorney, deceased.

For sale in 1765 were a garden at the south end of Cheese Lane held by William Hodges and a small garden adjoining Cheese Lane held lately by Mrs Izard, a new built stone house in Market St with gardens and stable now in the holding of Mr Vines, the Catherine Wheel in Market Street with stable and gardens lately held by widow Page, also a house and shop adjoining. In 1785 the Swan Inn in the Market Place plus a house opposite being a milliner's shop were sold and the estates were 'privileged with an entire pew each in the church.' Also for sale was a separate building adjoining Mr Symonds' butchers known by the name of Chandle-House which may be turned into a dwelling. Also two houses and gardens in Cheese Lane.

There was a clutter of houses and shops called Butcher Row at the bottom of Market Place. Mr Young, a surgeon and 'man-midwife' took a shop there in 1778. A grocery shop was sold there in 1782 and in 1850 the Three Tuns public house and butcher's shop comprising brewhouse, stable and outbuildings was up for sale. Butcher Row was cleared around 1870 to enlarge the market area but not before various residents had objected to Sunday trading. In 1823 a petition with twenty signatures bemoaning the butchers was sent to the churchwardens[228]:

228 NRO document 350P/623

"We the undersigned of the Town of Wellingborough lamenting that the Sabbath should be openly and regularly profaned in a variety of instances by Butchers exposing their meat for sale by Hair dressers keeping open their shops &c &c request that you will immediately put in force the Laws more particularly directed against all such indecent and scandalous proceedings."

In 1785 five tenements with gardens near the churchyard were sold. Their annual rent was nine pounds thirteen shillings. In 1828, two tenements near Hog Hill (lower Church Street) were up for sale. One previously occupied by a carpenter comprised a parlour, sitting room, kitchen, two bedrooms, two attics and cellar plus a large barn, carpenter's shop, hovel with a sawpit, pigsties and yard. The other had sitting room, kitchen, two bedrooms and attic.

Three tenements with workshops in Workhouse Lane (now Church Lane) 'with an exceedingly good well of water in the yard' were sold in 1811. In 1809 the White Horse in Pebble Lane was for sale; a substantial stone built and slated dwelling house, brewhouse, cellar, lead water pump and yard. In 1840 a tenement with sash windows to the front in Pebble Lane comprising two parlours, kitchen, brewhouse, warehouse, cellar, two chambers and two attics with small yard and garden was for sale. In 1851, premises in Pebble Lane for many years used as a currier's business were for let comprising; two large workshops, scouring and size houses, two warehouses, stable and gig house, large drying sheds, and a yard with water pumps. In 1864 a lofty dwelling house in Pebble Lane of four bedrooms, parlour, sitting room, kitchen, cellar, pantries plus two cottages fronting the road commonly called 'The Back Way' was available. In 1830 a capital house in the centre of the town with yard, stable, chaise house and other extensive outbuildings was sold.

The Swan Inn in the Market Place was for let in 1829 having a 'capacious' yard with two small gardens and eleven stables and between thirty and forty single stalls. The new tenant will take the household goods, furniture, brewing vessels, port and sherry wines, spirits, ale and beer, hay and corn at a fair valuation which is expected to be between £700-£800. In 1832 'a genteel and comfortable dwelling house suitable for a small family with good sized gardens' was for sale in Silver Street.

Market Street

Market Street. Note top of Cheese Lane on the right. Pre-1904.

North side

Fronting onto Broad Green in 1777 was a substantial farmhouse, sashed and covered with slate and tile, barns, stables and a dove house, with well-planted orchards covering about three acres. Also there in 1798 was a 'good family house' consisting of three parlours,

servants' room and kitchen, four bedrooms, two dressing rooms with three garrets and good cellars, laundry, brewhouse, double coach house and stabling for six horses, with barns, outbuildings, a kitchen garden and thirty-two acres of pastureland. In 1823 at Broad Green a stone-built tenement with bake house, storeroom, large fagot hovel, good yard and pigsties was for sale and the premises had been used as a bakehouse for the past fifty years.

For auction at the Swan Inn in 1805 was a farmhouse with barns, stables, cowhouse, wood house, pigsties, yard and garden together with a large orchard planted with 'very choice' fruit trees and several ash and elm trees situated in Gold Street lately occupied by Mr John Beal plus two acres adjoining containing an estimated seventy-seven ash and elm trees and three cottages.

In the High Street a modern built house with outbuildings, an excellent garden and small close was sold in 1811. The house had an arched cellar, entrance hall, kitchen and parlour, a large dairy, three bedrooms on the second floor and two large attics with loft over them, a large brewhouse and a coach house. The premises were said to 'form a complete residence for a small genteel family'.

A farmhouse with barns, stables and outbuildings in Buckwell End together with a small close or pightle next to the farm was for sale in 1780. Also in Buckwell End a farm house, homestead with large yard, two barns, stables, cow house and other conveniences with four closes near the homestead was sold in 1811.

In 1817 there was a tenement at the top of Jackson's Lane comprising a parlour and kitchen on the ground floor, three chambers, a cellar, plus a large shop and warehouse adjoining plus a yard with water, gardens and outbuildings. For sale in 1833 in Jackson's Lane were tenements one occupied by a pipe maker comprising a front shop, parlour, kitchen, two bedrooms and a brewhouse. The other tenement comprised a large sitting room, small back room and three chambers. The outhouses comprised a stable, wood and cart hovels, piggeries, water pump, and a walled fruit garden.

The last old barn in Jackson's Lane

The estate of the late John Newton Goodhall was sold in 1822 comprising a house with yards, gardens, coach house, stable and outbuildings in the High Street comprising a large entrance hall, drawing room, another good room. In the back was a very large and lofty dining room with circular French window looking upon the lawn. Also a spacious kitchen with butler's pantries, larder, dairy, back kitchen, brewhouse, laundry and other buildings attached. On the second floor three excellent bedrooms at the front and two at the back and dressing room. On the third floor three good attics. There is a large garden with choice fruit trees with a large greenhouse or grapery and a roomy melon range. The back yard is very large with a new three stall hunter's stable, coach house and wood barn with pigsties. The estate is a new build and calculated for a gentleman of fortune. The purchaser will have the opportunity to acquire an excellent orchard of three acres with a convenient farmyard and a good cottage.

The old, established public house known by the sign of the Rule and Compass in the High Street was to let in 1842. The premises would suit a carpenter, wheelwright, blacksmith, butcher or baker to run along with the public house. The Hatton Hall estate lately in the possession of Reverend Charles Vivian deceased was for sale in 1846 comprising mansion house, gardens, plantations, pleasure grounds,

stabling for twelve horses, coach house and park of thirty to forty acres. The house was described as principally a new build of Elizabethan construction.

In 1848 two newly built tenements and a bakehouse were for sale in the High Street with gighouse, stables, washhouse, wood and coal houses, with yard and gardens. Also three newly built cottages near to the above in or near Jackson's Lane with a pump and well of excellent water. In 1850 James Tompkins, pipe manufacturer, moved from Jackson's Lane to St John Street leaving his tobacco pipe kiln in working order and available to let. The premises had good fruit trees and good water. In 1854 a substantial messuage previously a beer-house known as the Club Tavern in Jackson's Lane together with the pipe kiln, pipe shop, and other buildings were for sale. In 1879 three new tenements situated in Jackson's Lane were for sale. One carried on a grocery business and there was a large sewing machine workshop in another.

The last old cottage on Broad Green.

West side

In 1804 Bassett's Close was described as seven acres with a 'new built hovel upon it' and a 'small spinney of wood and orchard adjoining' with a considerable quantity of timber growing there'. For auction at the White Hart Inn in 1849 were four tenements, one used as a butcher's shop, in the main street in the West End together with stabling, cow house, piggeries, outbuildings and garden ground. Adjoining this lot were three tenements with wash houses to the

rear and two other lots of six cottages each. In 1861 a house with seven rooms, outbuildings, garden, and yard on the west side of High Street was sold. It had excellent water and a wheelbarrow road or way into Jackson's Lane. The old established Axe & Cleaver in the High St was let in 1861.

East side

In 1773 a public house known by the sign of the Chequer was for let consisting of five rooms, two cellars that contain twenty hogsheads of ale, a brew house, a barn, a very large yard and gardens. To let in 1813 was a 'very substantial built house' with pleasure and kitchen gardens and two acres of land situated in the East End. The house comprised an entrance hall, breakfast and dining parlours, drawing room, three bed chambers, four attics, two arched cellars, a two-stall stable, a water pump and other conveniences. The Sow and Pigs public house was advertised in 1821 as having a butcher's shop, pig yard, sties, barn, stables, yard, garden all belonging to it along with a pasture close of about five acres. The Railway Inn in Cambridge St comprising parlour, sitting-room, kitchen, cellar, three bedrooms, two attics, brew-house, wash-house, stable garden, bowling alley, pump and well, and three cottages in the yard was for sale in 1856.

Market Street from Gloucester Place, pre-1915

South side

At auction in 1784 was Collins' Wharf occupied by Mr P. Collins of Islip comprising very comfortable apartments, stabling, granaries, warehouses and deal sheds, a salt-house lined with lead, an elevated 'compting' house, farmyard with barns and hovels and 'a beautiful canal which flows from the River Nine to the centre of the wharf. Plus forty-eight acres of fertile land 'as any in the Kingdom' and upwards of 250 trees on the borders of the grazing plots. These premises are nearer the town than either of the public wharfs and are well adapted to command all the coal trade above the bridge'. The route of the canal mentioned in this advertisement can still be seen leading from the Dog and Duck to the Embankment.

Stoney Gate meadow below Dog & Duck looking towards the river. The tree line leading to the Nene marks the path of the canal.

For sale in Sheep Street in 1832 was a neat and comfortable dwelling close with a small close or orchard of about two roods and three adjoining small dwelling houses. In the same year a modern house at the south entrance of the town was available with a coach house, stables for four horses, gardens, shrubbery, orchard and four closes of land. The whole property of forty-four acres was in a ring fence. For auction at the Hind in 1849

were thirteen cottages lying together in or adjoining Sheep Street together with barns, outbuildings, stabling, coach house and small garden of two acres to the rear.

These descriptions reveal a far more rustic appearance and simpler albeit very challenging lives. There were large family houses in and around the centre where many of the 'principal inhabitants' lived. They had gardens and orchards that have now gone. As well as this the town was full of yards and lanes that housed much of the population together with their trades and livestock. Conditions for many families were cramped with little privacy and poverty was ever-present. In a valuation of 1839 for instance, Hooper's Passage off Cambridge Street contained twelve cottages, there were twenty-seven cottages in Salem Lane, twenty-three cottages in Pebble Lane including the Sportsman's Arms and over thirty premises in Jackson's Lane. Although perhaps an extreme case, an inquest at the Chequers Inn in 1886 considered the case of Mary Ann Whitnell, 47, of Hooper's Passage who had reportedly died of neglect. The inquest simply found however that she 'was in a state of poverty, that she had no bed clothes and had not been undressed for a month and was covered in vermin'. Dr Clark had previously ordered the Relieving Officer to provide bedding and support but it appears they had either not been provided or taken. Her husband who was a furnace labourer earned about ten shillings a week and no action was taken against him.

Nature

Another way of appreciating the changes is to imagine the natural environment. Before enclosure in 1765 the town had four open fields. With no mechanization, no pesticides and no weed killers the fields provided much more sustainable habitats than the sterile albeit highly productive landscapes seen today. Before enclosure, a large proportion of the open fields was left fallow each year which enabled ground nesting birds and hares to thrive. Hedgehogs were so numerous that they were considered a nuisance and people were paid to catch them. The accounts of William Lord, constable for Wilby in 1639/40 show that George Grove was paid one pound for 'moletaking for one wholl yeere'. He was also paid four pence for two fulmers (polecats) and four pence for two fulmers and a hedgehog. John Norman was given two pence for a polecat. Otters lived in

the Wellingborough stretch of the Nene and two were killed in the late 1800s near Irthlingborough as they were deemed a nuisance to fishermen.

John Cole also gives us a glimpse into the town nearly two hundred years ago. He mentions apricot trees growing against a wall in Jackson's Lane and good cherry orchards, one being in Buckwell End. Grapes were a common sight on houses in the main streets as were large pear trees in gardens and there was a substantial pear orchard in the West End. He tells of nightingales that sang on summer evenings in 'the Park', which was the area between Gold St and the town, and on the Harrowden Road near Redwell mill. Other birds that he implies were present, although it is not certain that they were, are Hen Harrier, Barn Owl, Short-eared owl, Raven, Hooded Crow, Wryneck, Bull finch, Reed Bunting, Woodlark, Redstart, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Goldcrest, Wheatear, Stonechat, Flycatcher, Swift, Nightjar, Sand Martin, Corncrake, Curlew, Woodcock, Snipe, Redshank, Lapwing and Plover. Some of these species are still around but by and large they are gone or their presence much reduced, their habitats lost to agriculture and habitat destruction. A large flock of starlings performed its aerobatics before roosting overnight between Ditchford and Higham. However, Cole commented on the loss of marshy habitats in the parish and how that had reduced the numbers of birds. Widespread shooting of anything that moved also became a serious problem for the survival of some species.

CHAPTER 14

RIVERS, BRIDGES, WELLS AND MILLS

Rivers and bridges

Two rivers acted as parish boundaries; the Nene to the south and the Ise to the east. Like many river names, the origin and meaning of the name 'Nene' are obscure and are probably pre-English and possibly Celtic. Locally it is pronounced as if 'Nen' but towards Peterborough and further east it is pronounced as 'Neen'. This may have something to do with a greater influence of Danish settlement in eastern Northants and its influence on dialect. The river name occurs in several medieval inquest reports in the county as 'Nene' but it is hard to tell from this how it was pronounced. The river Ise or Ise brook is a much shorter river that rises near Naseby and flows into the Nene at Wellingborough. The name Ise derives from Ouse which basically means water[229].

The Nene today has clean-cut channels, solid banks and locks to help navigation but before the mid-eighteenth century it looked very different. A survey taken in 1613 with a view to improving transport of goods by boat describes how the course of the river was blocked by channels clogged with silt and vegetation, defective bridges, dilapidated mills, mill dams, reed beds and willow trees. In some places it was so overgrown that the proper course of the river could not be made out[230]. Although they knew at the time how to fix it, the task of dredging and removal of vegetation to improve navigation was not possible until much later. The river inspired John Askham's poem, *To the River Nen*,

The sweet soft music of thy babbling tide
Is care's own lullaby, and, once again
Feelings akin to boyhood warm my breast;
As straggling sunbeams into dungeons glide.

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229 Ekwall, E.A. (1960). *The concise Oxford dictionary of English place-names*, 4th Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

230 Jenkins, H. (1991). A survey of the river Nene in the reign of James I, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, Vol. VIII, No. 3, pp.190-196.

The Embankment, pre-1950

Staples bridge/Long bridge

With the town lying on an important north-south route, the Nene had to be crossed and Staplesbrig' at Wenlingburg' is recorded as early as 1227 when people using it were encouraged by the Bishop of Lincoln to give alms for its maintenance in return for thirteen days' relaxation of penance[231]. This might mean that the bridge had been in place for some time and needed repair or, more likely, that it was under construction or that it had recently been built. Relaxing penance was common for those who contributed to bridge repairs and the bishop approved similar arrangements for Thrapston bridge in 1224 and 1226. Alms were collected at the bridge. The construction of Staples bridge in 1227 is unknown but a contemporary description of the south bridge over the Nene at Oundle (Crowthorpe bridge) in 1311 says that it was twelve feet wide and built of stone and mortar.

A question concerning Staples bridge is whether it might have been built of the site of an ancient crossing. The Roman town on the Irchester side of the Nene was served by a road that came up from the south but there is no evidence that it crossed the river and continued due north[232]. Much more likely is that there was a river crossing downstream of Wellingborough, perhaps below Ditchford,

231 *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, Vol. I, p.xxiv; Vol II, p. 225.

232 Margary, I.D. (1955). *Roman roads in Britain, vol. 1, South of the Foss Way-Bristol Channel*, London: Phoenix House.

connecting with the Roman road that ran from Irthlingborough to Lowick. As such, the site of the medieval bridge seems unlikely to have been on a Roman route. Over the next few hundred years however the geography of the river changed and the system of roads in the midlands began to take shape. At some point the site became a viable river crossing perhaps due to a combination of an evolving road system and the changing fordability of the river.

Some things never change and failing to maintain bridges and roads was guaranteed to annoy people. In 1330, the bridge at Ditchford was said to be in a dangerous condition and the townships of Irthlingborough, Rushden and Irchester were ordered to repair it. In 1380 the jurors of the hundred of Higham Ferrers complained that Hardwater (Hardwath') bridge was in a bad state through the neglect of Doddington and that the township should repair it. About the same time, the jurors of Huxloe hundred wanted a dangerous road in Irthlingborough mended by the town[233]. In 1392 a licence was granted to form the Gild of Our Lady in the parish church of All Hallows for charitable purposes including the maintenance of bridges in the parish.

Regulations for the open fields of Irchester from 1446 state that the tenants should carry stone and mortar to repair Staples bridge and to work there as well[234]. Wealthier residents often set aside a small sum of money in their wills for the repair of highways and bridges. In 1537 William Dennett gave six shillings and eight pence to the repair of Staples bridge, Sir Willyam Ellys gave three shillings and four pence in 1544 and Henry Rosse gave six shillings and eight pence yearly in 1556. In 1548/9, Edward VI was petitioned to return monies, presumably confiscated at the Reformation, so that bridges could be maintained. The place name was certainly in use for at least 500 years since Staples mill is shown near the bridge on a map of the county made around 1700 and on a map of the river made in 1754[235].

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233 Selden Society (1923). *Public works in mediaeval law*, Vol. II, London; Bridges, J., Vol. II, p.194.

234 Hall, D. (1992). *The open fields of Northamptonshire*, p. 13, Northamptonshire Record Society.

235 Morton, J. (1712). *The Natural History of Northamptonshire*, volume 1; Hatley, V.A. (1981). Lords, locks and coal, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, VI, No. 4, pp.207-218.

Why it was called Staples bridge is unclear but it may come from the Latin 'stapulum' meaning a market or a place connected to markets. The bridge was an important river crossing and possibly goods and produce going to and from London were exchanged and/or stored near the bridge. Alternatively, it may have arisen if goods were being sent up and down the river and the bridge acted as a place where townspeople could see what was passing through. Although the Nene was not entirely navigable then, it might have coped with local movement of goods. Other bridges, such as at Oundle, were centres of local trade in the medieval period and the river was used to move goods in medieval times[236].

As well as supporting the poor, the town elected officers to repair the roads and bridges as the account below from 1636 shows. The bridge reeves were continually buying stone to repair the roads.

The Account of John Brown, Willm Clendon, Thomas Poley & Wm Davis briggreeves for the twoe yeares last past

They are charged to have rec[eived] out of the towne chest by a warrant	£6-11-8
Layd out by them in gathering pebbles & mending of the highways & bridges in the 2 yeares last past as appears by theire p[ar]ticulars bills of accounts nowe seen & allowed	£7-13-1
So remayneth due to them from the towne	£1-1-5

Seen and allowed by us: Robert Beeton, Jeffry Fisher, Henry Clendon, Richard Lucas, Edward Putivant, Henry Hensman

In 1678 the overseers of the highways and bridges contracted with John Hilton, mason, to repair the arches. The Nene was not made navigable up to Wellingborough until the early 1700s and after that heavy trade in coal and other goods was possible by boat. New river channels were made to improve navigation. Coal was becoming increasingly vital for the expanding town as traditional fuel sources such as firewood were becoming depleted and a coal wharf, now the site of a pallet recycling business, was constructed near Staples mill.

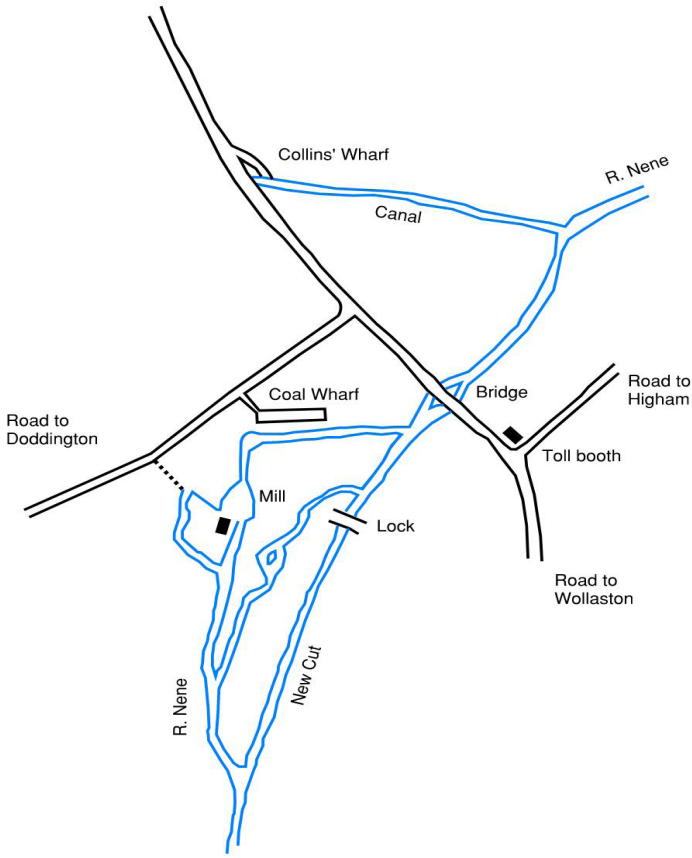
236 Steane, J. (1974) *The Northamptonshire Landscape*, p.28. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

The main bridge over the Nene later became known as the Long Bridge as it had to cross land that regularly flooded. Local worthies gave money to walling the bridge in 1720 and £56 were spent on repairs in 1756 including some on a footbridge at Swanspool.

Despite its upkeep, the main arch of the bridge collapsed in 1769 as a stage-waggon was going over it but the horses were saved. Following a sudden thaw early in February 1795 many of the bridges below Northampton were damaged. Mr Woolston who lived at the wharf house had to remove his near naked family in a boat at about four in the morning. He got his pregnant wife Elizabeth and two children onto the bridge and was helping another child aged about six when part of an arch fell onto his boat and both were lost. They do not appear in the burial register of the time which might mean that their bodies were never recovered, or at least not locally. Elizabeth Woolston and the other children were rescued a few hours later but lost everything they owned. A public subscription was opened for his widow described as 'left with two small children, and in a state of pregnancy, totally destitute of everything.' [237]

Based on a map of the Earl of Warwick's estate the river channels as they were in 1767 are shown below. The road from Doddington, broadly on the line of the dual carriageway by Tesco's supermarket met, as it still does, the London Road. On the south side of the river the road split at the tolbooth into the current road to Wollaston and a left turn onto the old road to Higham Ferrers on the line of the current A45. A new river channel and lock intended to improve traffic on the river are shown as is Collins' wharf where the Dog and Duck was built not long after.

237 *Star*, 26th February 1795; NN&Q, IV, p.78; *Northampton Mercury*, 14th February 1795.



A new channel was cut in the meadows upstream of the bridge in 1832 to improve navigation and about 1841 an archway was cut into the bridge so that horses no longer had to be taken under the bridge on boats. The railway station near the bridge and the removal of the toll booth had increased traffic across it but it was narrow such that only one vehicle at a time could cross and there was no provision for pedestrians. The arches were small and in times of flood held up the water. The approach from the town to the bridge was much improved in the mid nineteenth century with the planting of trees to create the New Walk on London Road. It took some time for authorities to agree to a new bridge and pay for it and the clerk to the council, Mr Markham, pressed the point by saying that if anyone objecting to the proposed new bridge went to Wellingborough then 'he would most likely find himself at the bottom of the Nene'[238].

238 NN&Q, IV, p.80.

John Askham's sentiment was captured in his sonnet *The Old Bridge*,

Boys peering o'er the zig-zag parapet;
The buttresses, the sturdy shoulders set
To break the rushing floods' resistless march.
I love the dear old bridge, to me it brings
The memory of many pleasant things

A new bridge was opened in December 1890 in unfavourable weather. Streets were decorated with flags and bunting. There was great ceremony for the opening with representation from all the town's worthies, various trades and people in boats[239]. A holiday was declared in the town after 1pm and Praed's brewery played Dulley's brewery (3-1) and later there was a banquet in the Corn Exchange. The day before there had been a public concert and ball. The bridge that now carries traffic over the Nene was built in the 1970s.

Irewell and other bridges
In the late twelfth century a mill at Tingden (Finedon) near Irewell bridge was gifted to the Priory of St Andrew in Northampton. A coroner's inquest held at Finedon in 1347 into the accidental drowning of John Hurre says that he fell in the river between 'Irenwellebrigge' and 'le est milne' (the East mill) at Wellingborough. A mill called Wetemill next to Irnewellebrigge was leased in 1353 by William of Great Harrowden. William Dennett of Wellingborough gave twenty pence to the repair of Yerwell bridge in 1537 and the same Irewell bridge is mentioned in 1539/40[240]. Given that there was once a mill on the Ise at the bottom of Harrowden Lane in Finedon, formerly called Harrowden Mill Lane, this seems the mostly location of Irewell bridge. From Wellingborough, it was at the end of Nest Lane which was an old route to Finedon's mills. Although it was in Finedon parish, Wellingborough perhaps had meadows near it and it may have been an important crossing.

A stone bridge over the Ise on the road to Finedon and Thrapston is mentioned around 1540 although it is presumably much older. In his will of 1500, Richard Clerke gave twenty pence to the repair of

239 NN&Q, IV, pp.121-124.
240 Dugdale, W. (1846). *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. 5, p. 186; NRO Knightley K(C)091, 1353; NN&Q, VI, p.161.

Breke bridge although it is not clear where it was[241]. A wooden pile bridge over the Ise at the bottom of Mill Road was replaced by a stone bridge in 1886. Swanspool bridge was built in the late 1800s and before that there was a footbridge as the stream was fordable by cattle and horses. In trying to cross the brook a chaise on its way to Wollaston overturned there in 1795 but the occupants escaped through a window with 'no further hurt than a good ducking'[242]. A large part of Swanspool brook was covered and the old palisading removed in 1886.

Wells and ponds

There was an abundance of wells in the town to supply houses and trades and for a hundred years the town had a reputation for wells which contained water with healing properties. The water was called chalybeate which means water containing iron salts. The most popular was Redwell and the diplomat Sir Francis Nethersole came to take the waters in 1625 and along with other courtiers probably spread the word in high places. Old sources assume that it took its name from the reddish colour given to the stones that its water ran over but it was originally called *rodewellemor* meaning reed spring[243].

Queen Henrietta spent time here in 1627 and Wilby's parish register which unusually contains all sorts of parish accounts shows, 'A levy made the 16th of July 1627 for her majesties household' and a side note made later attributes the levy to the visit of Queen Henrietta 'to drink the famous mineral water in Wellingboro' Field.' State Papers of July 1628 record the intention of the Queen to go to Wellingborough and at Wilby a similar levy was made for 'provision' of the Queen. John Askham portrayed the visit in *King Charles' Entry into Wellingborough,*

Slowly along the bannered streets
The pageant takes its course
Up to the breezy tented field,
To healing Red Well's source.

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241 Salzman, L.F. (1937). *A History of the County of Northampton*, Vol.4., pp.135-146.
242 NN&Q, IV, p.74.
243 Gover, J.E.B., Mawer, A., and Stenton, F.M. (1933). *Placenames of Northamptonshire*, CUP.

The Queen returned with Charles I in 1637 and stayed at the White Swan on the Market Place. Oliver Cromwell also took the waters at Wellingborough to treat stomach cramps[244]. The 'Red-well' was visited by John Morton the summer of 1703 and he noted that it was about half a mile north-west of the town near the foot of a hill in an open field and that it had kept flowing during the extreme hard frost of 1683[245]. Morton said that he could not determine why or when the water was first credited with medicinal properties. The town was listed in a directory of where to go to take mineral waters published in 1740 and the waters from it formed a 'large Brook'. In 1763 the waters were said to be 'of great use in all disorders arising from obstructions &c. It has also been so successfully used in bathing by promoting a gentle perspiration'[246]. Redwell was at the western end of Somerford Road.

Cole reports that the water from Red Well, which was a spring, was 'esteemed highly efficacious in various disorders' and that the king and queen had stayed in tents near the well to take the water at its source. The waters were 'tested' by all sorts of worthies and physicians and were pronounced very good for the constitution. Doubtless the town must have benefitted from the trade that arose from the waters. Parish accounts show ten pounds spent on timbers for the well in 1640. In the late eighteenth century there was a large stone horse trough there. While the water was doubtless very wholesome, claims of its medicinal properties were most likely nonsense. How and why the Wellingborough brand took off and reached the royal court is unknown but its fame was short-lived as many other counties claimed healing waters of their own, but doubtless trade in the town benefitted for a time[247].

Near Red Well was Stanwell. This was originally called Steynwelle meaning stone well and was probably linked to nearby ancient stone quarrying. It was on Niort Way just north of the junction with Hardwick Road. The Buckwell was an important water supply from

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244 Dictionary of National Biography.

245 Morton, J. (1712). *The Natural History of Northamptonshire*, Vol. 2, p.277.

246 Short, T. (1740). *An essay towards a natural, experimental and medicinal history of the principle mineral waters of…….Northamptonshire*; Martin, B. (1763). *The natural history of England*, Vol. II, p. 127.

247 Hembry, P. (1990) *The English spa, 1560-1815: A social history*. Athlone Press.

medieval times if not before. Other wells included Lady's Well which was on the road to Finedon (Ladywell field was somewhere around Hillside Rd) and Soap well, so-called because of its soft water, was an open well in the East End. There were springs also at Burymoor and the 'Rising Sun Spring' which was in the Rising Sun Spring Ground on the north side of Mill Lane just before the mill[248]. A map of 1827 shows Wyche's Well (possibly a corruption of Whitechurch well) at the top of Silver Street but south of Oxford Street, and London Well which was near the Harrowden Road near Redwell mill. Another substantial well was in Croyland gardens and a large rectangular structure presumed to be an old well was found between Queen St and Church St when the Technical College was built[249].

Ponds were an important part of the landscape and in a parish the size of Wellingborough there must have been many. Some were natural and fed by springs. Others were man-made such as on the site of former stone pits. Used as water sources for livestock they also added to environmental diversity. Up to the late 1800s and possibly later there was a pond at Swanspool. Near the Dog and Duck there was a pond called 'Shop Tub' where workers met to air their trade grievances. John Askham said of it, 'Tall bell-crowned hats, leather and linen aprons, short pipes and pale faces… Such was the old state of things'[250]. An old sketch map of the town names Herriott's Lane as Apostle Pond Lane and Cole says Apostle pond was behind The Boot. This is presumably linked to the Apostle/Postle family who lived here in the eighteenth century. Rock pond was on or near Broad Green. A pond in the East End was removed in 1875. There was also Brown's pond at Skitterdine and Buckwell End pond. Cole remarks that they were more of a nuisance than a benefit, but the wildlife might disagree.

Mills

Domesday Book mentions three mills at Wellingborough. They may have been in the same places as the three mills of modern times namely Little mill and East mill on the Ise and Turnell's mill on the Nene. From the 1320 survey of the lands of Crowland abbey we know that there were two water mills and a fulling mill (a water mill used

248 Cole, pp.157-176, p.249.
249 Palmer & Palmer (1972).
250 NN&Q, IV, p.80

in the manufacture of cloth). In 1645 during an outbreak of plague Mr Hall was paid for the use of his mill as a 'pest-house' and in 1647 'sick persons' were being treated there[251]. Which mill this was is not clear and recorded burials were only a little higher than normal in 1645. This might mean that the effects of the plague were small or perhaps that the burials of people who died from it were not recorded.

East mill

In 1352, Robert de Morlee, knight and marshal of Ireland granted his water mill and all the rights to it at Wellingborough that he had inherited from his father to John Pyel and Adam Fraunceys of London. John Pyel was born in Irthlingborough and became Mayor of London. The mill changed hands again after his death in 1386[252]. This mill seems likely to have been the corn mill called East mill mentioned in 1539/40 as being granted to John Pratte for forty shillings a year and was previously in the hands of Crowland Abbey. In 1590, lands including the 'water myll called East Mylne late of Crowland Abbey' leased in 1576 to Henry Pratt at a yearly rent of forty shillings were granted to Richard Knowlis and William Doddington.

In 1683, a millwright called Henry Hutchinson came to hire East Mills and was arrested by the constables who took him before the law thinking he was someone else. He was kept in Northampton gaol and then in Newgate from which he was released. His capture had cost him twenty pounds and he petitioned the king for his costs[253]. Known as Butlin's mill around 1870 and later as Smith's mill and Hobill's mill, the mill and meadow were advertised to let in 1898 by Thos. Butlin & Co. of the Irthlingborough Iron Works which was situated on the other side of the river where the British Leyland foundry was later located. The mill stopped working at the end of the nineteenth century and the buildings were used for other purposes but nothing now remains.

Staples mill (Turnell's mill)

It is fairly certain that a water mill stood near the bridge over the Nene in the eleventh century. In 1525/6 a farm of two mills called Stapull mills together with the holmes, lands and fisheries appertaining were granted to Brian Todde for thirty years at an annual rent of six

251 *Northampton Mercury*, 28th Jan 1888, p.9

252 Calendar of Close Rolls, Richard II: Vol. 3, 1385-9.

253 Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1684-4.

pounds. A horse-driven mill is mentioned in 1539/40 as granted to John Peke at twenty shillings a year may have been on the same site. In 1576, Isiah Yarner was granted a forty-year lease on two water mills called Stapull Mills formerly owned by the abbey because he offered to repair them. The Queen had leased the mills to John Denett for twenty-one years and they 'are in such decay for lack of timber that they cannot be repaired without great expense'[254].

Two mills 'called Stapull milles with appurtenances and houses belonging to the mills late of Crowland' are mentioned again in 1590. One or both seems likely to have been on the site of Turnell's mill. Known as Staples mill for centuries, it was later named after George Turnell, a miller who took the premises in the mid-nineteenth century. It became part of Whitworths in the late nineteenth century and was a popular but dangerous bathing spot. Two men drowned in Swallow brook near the mill in 1867 and two more near the lock in 1895[255]. Adjoining cottages were demolished in the 1960s and the mill buildings were demolished in the 1970s to make way for A45 flyover. The water wheel and some gearing are still in place. The name survives in Turnell's Mill Lane.

Little mill

Little mill, sometimes known as Warren's mill, Knight's mill and Page's mill depending on the miller at the time, stood at the bottom of Mill Road on the Ise and dates from medieval times. In 1347, Adam Derby was accused of stealing a tunic from Richard Pote at Litelmilne in the fields of Wendlyngburgh. He was later acquitted. In 1356, John of Finedon was working at a mill called 'le Lytle milne' when a large piece of timber fell on him. He lived for four days, received the last rites and then died[256]. The mill was accessed by a track along what became Mill Road (formerly Mill Lane) and suffered a serious fire in 1807 but was rebuilt[257]. It was converted for leather production (currying) and went out of use in the twentieth century although parts of the building remained. Strangely perhaps, next to it was the Rising Sun which sounds suspiciously like an inn and maybe catered for railway workers. The inn would have been named after the nearby Rising Sun spring.

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254 NN&Q vol. 6, p.163; Calendar of Patent Rolls, Elizabeth I, Vols V and VII.

255 *Northampton Mercury*, 14th June 1895, p.3

256 The National Archives, JUST3/137 membrane 2d; JUST2/113, membrane 37.

257 Cole, History of Wellingborough.

The river Ise at Little mill, upstream

Redwell mill

A small overshot corn mill stood on Redwell stream which fed into Nest brook that in-turn fed into the river Ise. It was built in 1823 and was opened with some ceremony[258]. Like other mills it was often known by the name of the miller in this case Dickens' mill, Redwell mill and in the late nineteenth century Kilbourn's mill. In 1830 the 'newly erected overfall corn mill' together with a cottage and about twenty-nine acres containing a 'newly erected' windmill' adjoining the road to Kettering were to let. It had been in the occupation of Thomas Robinson who had built it. Alfred Dickens advertised for sale the farm at Wellingborough mill 'adjoining the Kettering turnpike road' in 1835.

In the 1860s Dulley's brewery purchased rights to the water along with a spring at White Delves (the White Well) and connecting pipes were laid in 1867. The Redwell stream suddenly stopped flowing in 1878 and the flow of White Delves spring diminished[259]. Redwell mill had gone out of use by the early twentieth century but the mill and mill pond were still there. It was located between the current Kilborn Close and Weir Close.

258 Palmer and Palmer (1972), p. 163.

259 *Northampton Mercury*, 7th September 1878.

Whitworth's mill
The Whitworth family had interests in nearby Turnell's mill and purchased the site of the present mill on the south bank of the river. Tenders for the building of a steam mill on the Nene for J.B. Whitworth were issued in 1886 and the premises used as a flour mill. The mill was built in 1887 and was conveniently located for transport by road, river and rail. Two wheat silos were caught in a ferocious fire in 1941 but the mill itself escaped much damage. Milling operations continued to grow and Whitworths became a large and successful business.

Whitworths mill built 1887

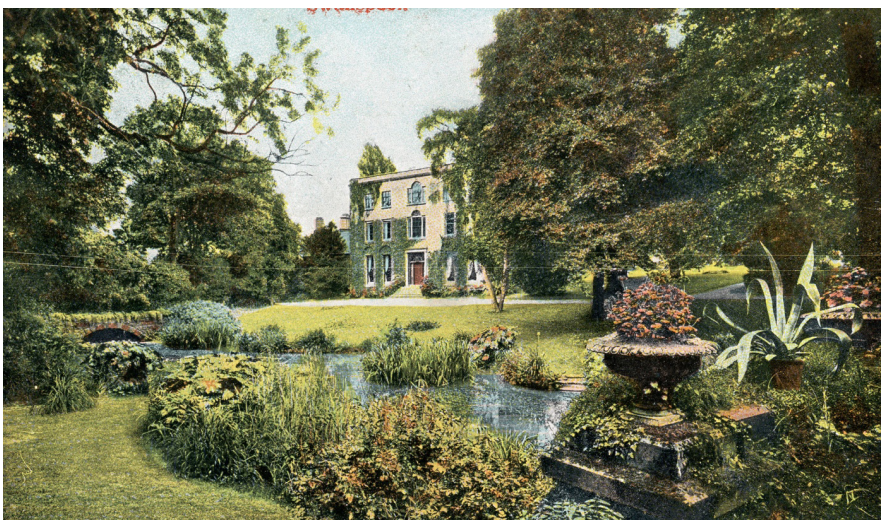
Windmills
Windmills were probably built to add to the capacity of the water mills that struggled to keep up with the rapid expansion of the town. A windmill is mentioned in 1583/4 and one stood near the East mill and may have been the one that in 1659 Thomas Harman of Wendlingborow bequeathed in 'Irthlinborow field' to his wife and after her to his daughter. A drawing of the south of Wellingborough made in 1719 shows two windmills on high ground on the east side of the town[260]. One is presumably next to East mill on the land later

260 *Northamptonshire in the early eighteenth century. The drawings of Peter*

occupied by Morris Motors' foundry and the other was located near the top of what is now Alexandra Road on land then called Windmill Close and Windmill Furlong[261]. A field map of 1767 shows a Windmill Close of twenty-six acres complete with windmill south-west of the town and this location is preserved as a street name on the Kingsway Estate. Another windmill stood on high ground on the Harrowden side of Redwell mill just south of Waterworks Lane.

Silk mill

At the bottom of Sheep Street near Swanspool in the early nineteenth century there was an area known as Dyers' End where there were several cottages, a barn and a piggery. This name links to a silk mill built there in 1826 to employ a hundred people 'for the throwing and winding of silk' but the venture was short-lived[262]. By 1839 the mill had been converted into nine houses alongside several cottages that fronted onto Swanspool brook. The placename Dyers' End was still used in the early twentieth century.



Tillemans and others. Northamptonshire Record Society, 1994.

261 Palmer & Palmer, p.165.

262 Cole, p.11.

CHAPTER 15

RESISTANCE

Wellingborough had its fair share of people who were prepared to resist change and protest if they did not like what was happening. On the other hand, there were also many who pushed for change to improve society. This might have been connected to its size and location on trade routes and thus the influx of people with new ideas and news from elsewhere. Some of those stories are summarised below.

The Diggers

In 1649, Gerrard Winstanley of Wigan had some sort of conversion. What caused it is unknown but it probably had something to do with an England ravaged by Civil War and the sight of starving families. The outcome of his epiphany was a passionate belief that land ownership was wrong and that it perpetuated inequality among men. Inspired by this idea, Winstanley and his followers began to dig and cultivate some common lands in Surrey although the authorities took a dim view of the matter. His radical idea spread and appealed to landless people who were struggling to make a living. In 1650 a pamphlet was published that illustrates how tough their lives had become. It is the story of the Wellingborough Diggers.

The pamphlet said that 1,169 people in the town received alms which if true must have been about half of the parish. Their words show how desperate they were[263],

"*..we have spent all we have, our trading is decayed, our wives and children cry for bread, our lives are a burden to us, divers of us having 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 in family and we cannot get bread for one of them by our labor; rich mens hearts are hardened, they will not give us if we beg at their doors; if we steal the law will end our lives, divers of the poor are starved to death already, and it were better for us that are living to dye by the Sword than by famine*"

263 See *Digger Tracts 1649-1650*, Aporia Press 1989; 'Another Digger Broadside', *Past & Present*, No. 42, pp.57-68; 'Diggers at Wellingborough', *The Northampton County Magazine*, pp.18-22; Gurney, J. (2007) *Brave community: The Digger movement in the English Revolution*.

('divers' means several or some of us).

The Diggers argued based on law, scripture and reason that the earth belonged to all men and thus the common and waste grounds belonged to the poor. By their logic they had the right to dig these lands to produce food their families. They claimed that some of the town's rich men namely Mr John Freeman, Thomas Nottingham and John Clendon have given their share of the common land to them and that farmers have given them seed. They hoped that by publishing their pamphlet sympathy for their cause would spread. The Diggers who put their names to the pamphlet were Richard Smith, John Avery, Thomas Fardin, Richard Pendred, James Pitman, Roger Tuis, Joseph Hitchcock, John Pye and Edward Turner. Most of these names appear in local records so they were probably from the town. James Pitman had a son baptised at All Hallows in 1638 and John Avery had a son baptised in 1644 and they may have been the same people.

Digger movements arose across the country but at Wellingborough they found some sympathy, or at least not so much opposition. But England was recovering from civil war and the authorities did not take kindly to people bucking the new political system. It was not so much what the Diggers were doing that was a problem, the courts were bothered by their thinking. Diggers across the country posed a threat to the new government and the authorities took action. A local Justice, Thomas Pentelow, was instructed to intervene and four Diggers were arrested and the others dispersed by force. Those arrested were taken to Northampton goal from where they were tried at the Quarter Sessions but were found not guilty. The State, however, wanted them convicted of riot and they were not released.

What became of these men is not known although a Richard Pendred was buried in 1678 and there were three marriages of a James Pitman from 1654 to 1661 suggesting that at least two of the Diggers made it through. Winstanley became a Quaker and it seems likely that the Digger movement had some influence on the emergence of the early Quaker community at Wellingborough.

Enclosure

After a bad harvest in 1693 protests and riots occurred across the

country caused by fears that scarce corn was being purchased for export. At Northampton the 'mobile' had been very unruly having cut the sacks of corn and thrown waggons into the river on successive market days. A great number of women had gone to market with knives in their girdles to force corn at their own prices[264]. Similar 'disorders' happened at Wellingborough. The residents objected again in 1744 to the export of corn and caused a riot. Over one hundred pounds was spent on prosecuting rioters at Wellingborough and elsewhere.

More resistance was shown when the parish was enclosed in 1765. Enclosure was a process through which a parish's medieval open field system was converted into a field system that in some places is still recognisable today. Before enclosure, Wellingborough had four large open fields that were divided into strips with people tending several strips in different fields and having common rights such as for grazing livestock. There were few hedges although some would have been used as boundaries between parishes or to mark other important boundaries and there were few if any buildings in the fields. Farms were in the township, not in the fields. With rising populations and advances in agricultural methods this ancient system became inefficient and although enclosure in Northamptonshire took place over 300 years much of it occurred in the eighteenth century. After enclosure, there were far more regularly shaped fields bounded by hedges or fences. Common rights of access disappeared and the notion of private property was strengthened. Farms and barns began to move out of the town and into the fields. Old roads and ways were often lost but where necessary were replaced with a new system of roads, tracks and footpaths although turnpike roads could not be altered.

Almost all of Wellingborough parish, over 4,000 acres, was enclosed following an Act of Parliament in 1765. The Act identified the common, open and arable fields, meadows, pastures and waste lands lying in West Field, the Upper or Middle Field, the Ham, ley ground called Bare Shank Leys, the East Field and the South Field. The lands tended by people were 'intermixed and dispersed in small parcels all over the said common fields' which made manuring difficult and expensive and, as it was, this situation could not improve. The

264 Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 11th November 1693

Enclosure Act set-out rules governing the upkeep of roads, access to spring water, the allocation of land for the vicar, removal of trees and hedges, and the drawing-up of an award listing the acres, roods and perches of each piece assigned to each proprietor. Notices were to be placed on the doors of the parish church.

The process though was not a smooth one. In common with many other parishes, the poorer parts of society were much troubled by impending enclosure. Wellingborough's situation was aggravated by the damaging fire in 1738 which left many families in debt nearly 30 years later. A petition was put to parliament stating that the inhabitants are very numerous and that removal of their common rights 'will be of the utmost prejudice to many of the petitioners and to the numbers of the poor people and labourers' and will reduce many of the poor who maintain a 'small but comfortable existence by their labour' to 'utter ruin'[265]. Opposition to enclosure became riotous in some parishes but in Wellingborough was more subtle.

The commissioners responsible for enclosing Wellingborough employed Thomas Cowper, born in the town and a noted mathematician and astronomer, to survey the fields and divide-up the land. This involved Thomas visiting proprietors to get their consent to enclosure, walking through the fields with the proprietors and tenants, people marking-up their own lands, surveying the land and making a map and extensive notes in field books. Surveying began in 1765 when Thomas with Richard Lucas and Richard Coles marked-out boundaries in the East Field. At night he had to write-up his field books before visiting various inns for a meal and to see his friends. Tenants often delayed surveying by failing to mark-out their land but it was all finished in September. Disputes were sorted out by mid-October when all the documentation was coming together. In January 1766 however, William Freeman's lodgings were broken into at night and the plans and field books were stolen. A reward of one hundred pounds was offered but was never given. A few days later, masked thieves tried to break into Cowper's house and take his copies of the books but failed. Ultimately though, and as so often, resistance proved useless and the process of enclosing the common fields of Wellingborough was completed.

265 *House of Commons Journal*, 26th February 1765, p.184.

Political unrest

People have a long history of resisting new technology based on fears that it will put them out of work. In November 1830, some men who had been arrested for destroying a threshing machine at Warmington were in a chaise being escorted to Northampton gaol. An eyewitness reported that the working classes had heard of the disturbances at Warmington and gathered to meet the escort. A mob overturned the chaise and extracted two men who had been arrested. The escort was 'pelted and shamefully abused by the mob'. In the evening the mob paraded and burnt an effigy of the prime minister[266]. Shortly afterwards, Mr Arbuthnot of Woodford asked for 200 cutlasses to be sent to Thrapston so that property could be defended against the mob. A crowd from Wellingborough destroyed threshing machines at Finedon and property owners were under fear of attack. Soldiers were again deployed in the area.

Also in 1830, some of the townspeople petitioned for the abolition of the death penalty for forgery and in 1831 for offences against property. They also petitioned against slavery, encouraging their Lordships to 'provide for the speedy and utter extinction of a system criminal and shameful that our country may not thenceforth be chargeable with the guilt of holding man in slavery, and that so foul a stain may no longer deface and pollute the national character.'

In 1832, Lord Brudenell was canvassing in the town when he and his friends were cornered in Cheese Lane, a dead-end. A mob of over a hundred placed carts and barrows at the top of the lane but His Lordship and colleagues escaped and continued canvassing. Later, His Lordship was severely injured by blows to the head and farmers attending the local market went to his assistance. The military were summoned from Weedon barracks[267]. They retired to the Hind and the Riot Act was read but violence continued. Benjamin Belcher (alias James Benjamin or James Belcher) was given two years' hard labour for his involvement. Later, William Butts, William Lea and John Montgomery were also charged. His Lordship asked for lenient sentences to be passed. Belcher, if that was his name, was released

266 Thompson, S. (2011). On the verge of civil war: The Swing riots 1830-1832, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, No. 64, pp. 68-80.

267 *Morning Post*, 15th September, 1832; *Northampton Mercury*, 20th October, 1832.

early on the grounds that others including the leaders received shorter sentences and that his wife and family depended upon him.

In 1848, a mob of several hundred assembled at the house of Mr Perrin, a shoe factor, who they blamed for 'a supposed reduction on several articles'; presumably cuts in prices or less work. The mob broke most of his windows and did other damage. Magistrates advised him to let the matter rest[268].

Another serious riot occurred in 1852. In the North Northamptonshire election the working men hoped for parliamentary candidates to oust Mr Maunsell 'whose boast it is to have gained no new idea during the past twenty years.' A young farmer from Finedon, who could vote, taunted the crowd but in return was struck on the head by a pebble. With the polling booth under a steady hail of pebbles the poll-clerks carried the booth away and the farmers who tried to rescue their injured colleague were attacked. Superintendent Knight was injured and carried from the affray. Magistrates reassembled the poll booth in the Hind Hotel where the Conservative party was headquartered but the crowd followed and destroyed the front of house. A truce was declared and over fifty men had been injured. Troops arrived from Weedon to quell the riot and were quartered at the White Hart Inn[269].

268 *Northampton Mercury*, March 18th, 1848.
269 *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 25th July 1852.

CHAPTER 16

OCCUPATIONS AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

In Wellingborough, like most towns in the past, there were a few professionals such as ministers, surgeons and lawyers but most people were employed in trade, service or agriculture. In 1777, the main occupations of able-bodied men aged 18-45 in the militia were shoemaking (112), labouring (39), weaving (29), servants (17), farming (15), leather manufacture (11), butchers (11), tailors (9), carpenters (9) and masons (9)[270]. This chapter first summarises the ancient inns in the town before looking at lace making, coaching, brewing, shoemaking, the coming of the railways, ironmaking and brickmaking.

Inns and signs

Being well-placed for travel, the town had its fair share of places where people could stay. The use of signs served a purpose in times when most people could not read and then as now signs would have attracted a certain brand reputation. Perhaps the most historic inn is the Hind Hotel and the sign seems likely to be connected to the crest of Sir Christopher Hatton which included a hind. Hatton came to possess the manor from the gift of Elizabeth I and the Hind was built on former abbey land possibly replacing a previous structure.

The Hind was supposedly built in the 1640s and there is a tradition that it was under construction in 1645 when King Charles was defeated at Naseby. However, a letter dated July 1642 by Thomas Jenyson the vicar of Irchester in relation to the destruction of Isham Cross by Puritans mentions local justices and lawyers dining at the Hinde in Wellingborough[271]. The dinner was for well-to-do people so it must have been in a fair state at the time. This suggests that either the current Hind was built earlier than 1645 or that there was previously another inn called the Hind in the town, perhaps on the same spot. Its architect and/or builder, William Batley, who died in 1674 aged 80 is remembered in a memorial inscription on the north wall of the church.

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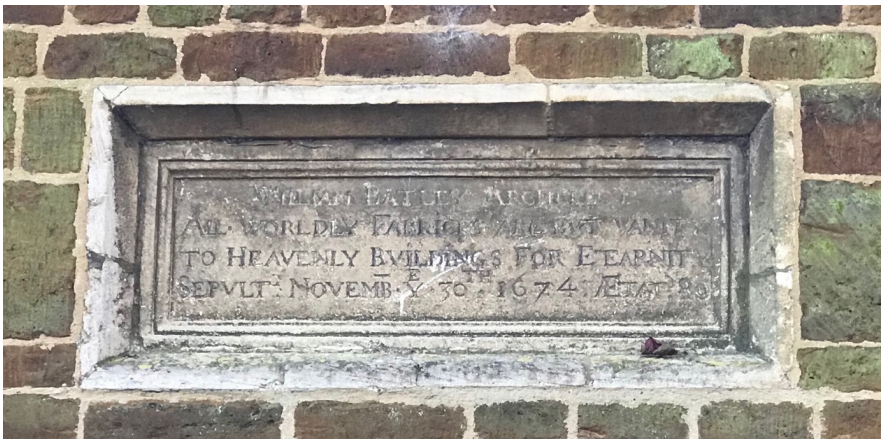
270 Hatley, V. A. (1973). *Northants militia lists 1777*, Northamptonshire Record Society, Vol. XXV.

271 King, P. & Wake, J. (1950). The matter of Isham cross, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp.17-24.



Memorial to William Batley

Confirming the idea of a previous Hind is a ballad composed in 1612 by James Ball of Wellingborough which he did 'openly and with a highe voice publishe and singe…in dyvers alehouses, tavernes and other open and publique places'[272]. As a conversation between a traveller meeting a shepherd on Bareshank Leys it goes like this,

Traveller: Well mett shepherd. From whence doth thou come and wither awaye?
Shepherd: From the good town of Wellingborrowe. So bonnye and soe gay.
Traveller: From Wellingborrowe, shepherd. What news at the Hinde?
Shepherd: Ill news Sir. Good ale is deare. Though women are kind.

This ditty was linked to a libel case involving Ellinor Grobye who was said by Hugh Chernock to be an 'honest and civil poore woman amongst her neighbours' whereas Ball was said by his better neighbours to be of 'troublesome disposition'. One of Ball's neighbours, John Hackney, said he was shocked by the ballad and that he had never heard anything like it. Ball, a catholic, had a reputation for bad behaviour and was blamed by Grobye for a libel against her which was intended to tarnish her name and thereby get her property. The libel in question was that she was one of the women who 'entertained travellers' at the Hind[273].

272 Fox, A. (1994). Ballads, libels and popular ridicule in Jacobean England. *Past & Present*, 145, 47-83. Bareshank Leys was at the top of the Sywell Road leading up to Moonshine Gap and south of Appleby Lodge.
273 Burgess, J.H. (1978). *The social structure of Bedfordshire and Northampton-*

A few years earlier in 1608 there was a legal case between Agnes Gibbes, widow, (plaintiff) and William Ball, husbandman, John Ball his son, innkeeper, and their servants (defendants) concerning a case of forcible entry, assault and imprisonment in the pound at Wellingborough[274]. Also curious is that a William Ball 'alias Ratlebones' was buried in 1633 and he was the only person in three hundred years to have his nickname recorded in the parish register. How he got it is unknown but it does seem appropriate if he had spent a lifetime annoying people. He could have been the same William Ball who in 1595 stood accused of using certain town lands for his own use instead of using them to benefit the Grammar School as intended. A court gave the lands to new trustees so that the incomes from them could be used to pay the schoolmaster's salary[275].

Hind Hotel, rear view

The will of Francis Gray made in 1705 left his manor 'commonly called Hatton Manor with Gages Fee and the Hynde Inn and the Bull Inn in the Butcherow' to his nephew. The tenancy changed regularly and in 1792 Charles Thomas of Yelden took it from Thomas Partridge. Mr Thomas respectfully informed the nobility, gentlemen, travellers, his friends and the public that he had taken the Hind Inn and earnestly wished for a continuance of their favours. He had

shire 1524-1674. Vol. 1, p. 311. D.Phil. thesis, University of York.

274 The National Archives, STAC8/150/16, June 1608.

275 *Victoria History of the Counties of England, Northamptonshire*, vol. II, p.263.

provided new beds, enlarged the stabling, and stocked-up the larder, wines and liquors. Post-chaises with able horses and careful drivers were available although he wanted 'a good cook'. The gateway in the front through which carriages once passed was converted in 1860. Sashed windows were replaced by mullion windows in 1872 and the staircase was altered in 1878[276].

A tenement in Wellyngborowe, called 'the Swanne', presumably an inn, is mentioned in the will of John Clerk citizen of London made in 1512. He gave the tenement to his wife Alice and on her death to John Tuk citizen grocer of London and Alianor his wife 'my doughter' and on their death to Raynold Mighell and Agnes his wife. John Freeman's will of 1557 mentions his house called 'the Swane' in the High Street. A meeting of justices was held at the Swanne in 1613 suggesting that it was an inn. Ralph Curson's will of 1574 mentions his house called 'the bell'.

The White Swan at the bottom of Market Place was there by 1610 and pulled down in 1829. Charles I and Queen Henrietta stayed there in 1637 and its royal patronage suggests that it was the best available at the time. However, it is thought to be the place where Horace Walpole (fourth Earl of Oxford) stayed in 1763 after which he wrote of Wellingborough, 'never lie there – the beastliest inn upon earth is there'.

The Vine is mentioned in 1632 and was there in the early 1700s. The Star in the High Street is mentioned in 1640, in the will of Thomas Hensman made in 1654 and again later. Paul Dennett left his inn called 'the Crowne' to his son Richard in 1650. The Stile and the Anchor are mentioned around 1650 also in the possession of the Hensman family. The diarist Robert Woodford spent two shillings on his dinner at the Angel in 1638 and then 'prayed to the Lord for thriftiness'[277]. The Angel inn is also mentioned in the will of Edward Henchman in 1658 and in the Free School accounts in 1688. It may have been on the same site as the Angel hotel where Oxford Street joins Silver Street.

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276 NN&Q, V, pp. 177-182.

277 'Squeezing comfort from the creature'/'soaring on the wings of faith': the diary of Robert Woodford. In P. Lake & I. Stephens (2015). *Scandal and religious identity in early Stuart England*: *A Northamptonshire maid's tragedy*. Boydell Press.

The Katherine Wheel is mentioned in the will of Thomas Hensman made in 1654 and later in the possession of Augustine Freeman. It partially burnt down when a firework fell on an outbuilding in 1741. A half penny token for the Sun and Moon was issued by John Worthington in 1668[278]. The token, below, shows on one side the rising sun and 'John Worthington of' (the Sun) and on the other side a crescent moon and 'Wellingborough 1668 His half peny'

Half penny trade token of John Worthington. Source: *The British Numismatic Journal* 1921-22, page 329.

The Royal Oake is mentioned in the burial register in 1691 and a Royal Oak beer shop was on Broad Green in 1839. The White Horse was present in 1699 and an inn of the same name was on Pebble Lane in the 1800s. The Swan and Nest is named in the will of Augustine Freeman in 1679 where it was also referred to as the Swan in the Crest and the New Swan. It may have stood near the junction of Cannon Street and Mill Road and if so could have been lost in the fire of 1738. The George in the West End is mentioned in 1707 and in 1743. The Golden Lion in Sheep Street was formerly a Tudor house dating from around 1540 and an inn since at least 1849. There may have been a Golden Lion in St John Street that served as a coaching inn in 1782. A fire was reported at the brewhouse of the Green Dragon in 1751. The Peacock inn is mentioned in 1730 and stood in Silver Street just above the Hind. A house and buildings called the Ramm Inn is mentioned in 1707.

278 *The British Numismatic Journal*, 1921-22, p. 329.

Course of the canal that linked the wharf at the Dog & Duck to the river.

The Old Swan inn mentioned in 1738 was in Silver Street just above the old Silver Cinema. The Sow and Pigs was in East End where Cambridge Street meets Market Street; possibly so-called because it was near an area known as Hog Hill. The town feofees let it together with brewhouse and stables in 1742 to William Chawney and again in 1758 to Thomas Tester. The Crown in Market Street was there by the late 1700s and the White Hart was in Market Street by 1743. The Half Moon ale house in Butcher Row was sold in 1755. The Cross Keys in St John Street was a departure point for coaches and wagons at least by 1782. Cross Keys Yard is mentioned into the mid 1800s. The Dog and Duck was there by 1792 and being located by the wharf it probably arose to serve the new commercial activity on the river in the late 1700s. The Unicorn is mentioned in 1767 and the Ship Inn in 1780. The Boot was a public house in the upper end of Herriot's Lane in 1796. The New Inn was on Broad Green by 1832. The Rose and Crown was in Sheep Street by 1800 and the Red Cow in the West End in 1813. There may have been other ancient inns in the town. In the nineteenth century many more public houses and beer shops opened to cater for a fast-expanding population – far too numerous to mention.

Lace

Information gathered for a parliamentary petition in 1698 found that 1146 people were engaged in the lace trade at Wellingborough. This figure may have been exaggerated but it may also reflect that a high proportion of the population was dependent on lace making one way or another. In 1712 it was an important industry returning about fifty pounds a week to the town[279]. By the late eighteenth century lace had become the main trade with much of it sent to London and for export. Five men liable to serve in the militia in 1777 were in the lace trade and John Cole recorded in his diary in 1834 that lace makers were mostly young women and boys who earned from two to eighteen pence a day but mostly sixpence[280]. John Askham's poem *The Old Grandame*, however, speaks of the life and hardships of an older lacemaker,

The old grandame loves to prattle
Of the good old times gone by,
When lace was worth the making,
And the worker's wage was high.

No husband now nor children
Hath the worthy grandame got
All dead save her darling grandson
He gardens her little plot

Coaching

The first service, the 'Kettering Flying Stage Coach or Berlin', set-out from Kettering in 1757 and passed through Wellingborough on its way to London. Some years later, around 1776, it started-out from Wellingborough and this continued uninterrupted until it ceased in 1844. Coaching directories (rather like modern bus timetables) printed in the late 1700s show that coaches and wagons left from the Cross Keys, The Windmill and the Golden Lion. In 1776, Thomas and Francis Partridge advertised the *London and Wellingborough Diligence* which would depart on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays returning Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 5 am. They could

279 VCH vol. 2, p. 337; Morton, *Natural History*
280 NN&Q, II, p.246.

carry three passengers at three pence per mile with a 10lb luggage allowance[281]. This seems more expensive than the train is now.

In 1829 the Wellingborough Post Coach was advertised as leaving the White Hart every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at six o'clock and was 'performed' by John Kirby, Thos. Kirby, Jno Gilbert, Wm Page, Amos Coles and Thos. Tester. They would not accept liability for losses for anything above £5 unless paid for accordingly. When the last coach came back on 26th October 1844 many people turned out to see it arrive. Mr Coles stood up on the coach, gave the whip a tremendous crack and said, "that's the last whip I'll crack in the face of steam"[282].

In a search for the man who had driven a coach the furthest Thomas Porter the one-time proprietor of the Wellingborough coach to London was nominated. He had driven for almost twenty-eight years which, it was said, must have involved about 563,000 miles to and from London (a 67-mile journey). He travelled six days a week during which time his passengers were never robbed even though no guard was employed. 'He was much respected for his sobriety and steadiness. He drove the coach home on the day of his death' and appeared well for two hours when he 'suddenly dropped down and expired within a few minutes' on 30th August 1806[283].

Thomas had some grief in an earlier life because in 1785 he put a notice in the *Mercury* stating that his wife Jane had for some time past contracted many debts 'much to his injury' and in order to obtain money had sold his clothes and other property 'at a very inferior price'[284]. The advert gave notice that he would no longer pay any debts incurred by his wife and that he would take legal measures to recover his property. Unlike other advertisements this one ended with, 'The mark of Thomas Porter' (a cross) suggesting that he could not write, although that was quite common at the time. He might have got some grief in 1796 as well when Mrs Brown of Hog-Stye house near Woburn lost her red Morocco cash case between Newport Pagnell and London on his coach. It contained a ten-pound note and six guineas (about £1,800 today although in those days a note could be cancelled which it was).

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281 *Daily Advertiser*, May 1776

282 *Northampton Mercury*, 2nd November 1844, p.3.

283 *Otago Witness*, October 1889; Thos Porter was buried on the 1st September 1806.

284 *Northampton Mercury* 28th March 1785. p.1.

Brewing

Early sale catalogues often mention that premises like inns and hotels had their own brewhouse and the following advertisement appeared in July 1738, 'At Anne Lambert's shop adjoining the Hind Gate there will be a sale of the very best sort of hops'. The onset of large-scale brewing may have started with William Crafts of Stoke Doyle who married Elizabeth Silsby at Wellingborough in 1764. In 1768 he was described as a farmer but in 1777 presumably the same William Crafts was listed as a brewer and in 1784 his brewery business was for sale. Up for sale were ale, beer, malt and casks necessary for wetting fifteen quarters of malt at a time all organised in a way that enabled brewing at low cost. Whoever purchased the assets would have lease of the premises which were 'spacious and convenient' consisting of a brewhouse well-supplied with water, store-room into which beer from the tuns can be conveyed, a close of about an acre, a cart lodge, a malt house, stables for fourteen horses, coal house, dwelling house consisting of two cellars, scullery, pantry, kitchen, two parlours, four bedrooms, one garret, two large yards, a garden with a good well with a pump near the house which also supplies the malting. This was advertised as a great opportunity for anyone wanting to get into the brewing business as there was no other brewery nearby[285].

Crafts' brewery was consumed by fire in 1780 and the premises were probably purchased by Andrew Wilson who in 1789 advertised that the Wellingborough Common Brewery will provide his friends and the neighbourhood with ale and beer of good quality and price. To private families and publicans he flattered himself that his brewery will become 'a very great accommodation' and he is now selling ale at two pence a gallon[286]. A common brewery supplied ales to private individuals and to alehouses that did not brew. In 1790 he advertised his 'excellent' porter (a dark ale) that was as good as could be found in London. He could deliver not less than four barrels within ten miles of Wellingborough carriage free at one shilling per gallon. He also offered 'excellent mild ale and beer'. Mr Wilson died in 1798 and he handed over all his estate to executors including Archibald Rodick. He willed that all his estate connected to the brewery, including several pubs in the town, and the coal trade be given to his

285 *Northampton Mercury*, 22nd March 1784, p.1.

286 *Northampton Mercury*, 7th March 1789, p.1; 10th April 1790, p.1.

sons if they would agree to carry on the business. It seems that they did agree but were not much good at it and were both bankrupted in 1815. After this the premises were taken over by George Margetts and by John Woolston whose brewery business in Sheep Street was founded in the early 1800s[287].

George Margetts was another common brewer but he pulled out of the business in 1828. He seems to have sold a going-concern since up for auction were 500 small casks, 100 large casks, fourteen vats from sixteen to 160 barrels each, two hydraulic engines, a malt crusher, horse-powered grinding stones, an oak mash vat, working tuns both square and round, coolers, cranes, copper and ironwork, lead pipes, coopers' tools and other fixtures. Also for sale were a quantity of beer, timber, four wagon horses, one broad-wheel wagon, one narrow-wheel wagon, broad and narrow-wheeled carts and horse harnesses. The premises were purchased by James Woolston.

In 1854 there was a legal case between Mr Woolston and Mr Sherwood a solicitor whose premises were next to the brewery[288]. At that time the brewery had been going for over fifty years and for all that time there was a 'lofty copper chimney' that puffed out smoke although it had not been a nuisance. Recently, Mr Woolston had installed a steam engine and another chimney close to Mr Sherwood's garden that blew black smuts all over it. The washerwomen were most discomforted. Mr Sherwood was awarded one shilling damages which does not seem very much. Woolston's brewery ran for nearly eighty years until it was taken over by Mr Campbell Praed and his brothers in 1878.

Praed's brewery was modernised in 1883 when a new chimney of 100 feet was built. By the late 1890s the Praed's brewery and mineral water company owned public houses in East Northants and north Bedfordshire. Although important for the town they never employed large numbers of people and about eighty Praed employees enjoyed their annual outing to Yarmouth in 1903. Praed's brewed until 1954 when the business was effectively taken over by Phipps of Northampton and much of the brewing equipment was removed. The Sheep Street site was taken over by the Council in 1955, demolished and turned into a car park.

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287 Cole remarks that Mr Croft's' brewery burnt down and that Mr Woolston had the brewery.

288 *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 20th July 1854.

Dulley's brewery was also a feature of the town for over a century. David Dulley purchased the Golden Lion in 1802 and around that time built the Swan brewery at the bottom of Sheep Street. His son William joined the business and his son David ran a chemist's shop in Silver Street. By 1840 they had five pubs in Wellingborough and seven elsewhere. David senior of Rosehill Cottage died in 1853 and was buried in the Baptist Chapel. The family managed the business which was extensively modernised in 1891 and built the swimming pool which opened in 1892. The death of Henry Dulley in 1920 spelled the end of the brewing business including 36 pubs and off-licences which was acquired by Campbell Praed & Co in 1920 and the landmark chimney at the brewery was brought down[289].

This swan motif once adorned the clock tower at the Swan brewery offices. It is now in the Swansgate centre.

289 Brown, M. (1998). *Brewed in Northants: A directory of Northamptonshire brewers 1450 to 1998*, Brewery History Society.

Shoemaking

Before the eighteenth century most towns and villages were largely self-sufficient in producing life's necessities. This was partly due to the difficulty of transporting bulk products very far. Although tanners and shoemakers were present in Wellingborough before the seventeenth century, their concentration was no more than average. John Gok was a cobbler (sutor) in the late fourteenth century. In 1519, Richard Maydebury of Wellingborough, a shoemaker, took refuge in the church at Finedon and confessed that he had stolen sixty pairs of shoes at Northampton along with a hide from William Dennett and other thefts. He abjured the realm and was despatched to the port of Dover for transit out of the country. In 1549, the 'leather searchers' of Higham Ferrers found that William Dennet of Wellingborough, a common tanner, and others had sold improperly tanned leather in the town and were fined twelve pence. John Harryet another Wellingborough tanner was fined for a similar offence in 1559[290]. In Northampton, on the other hand, leather workers and shoemakers were the largest occupational group in 1524 laying the foundations for a regional focus on shoemaking a hundred years later.

Specialisation probably begin in the seventeenth century when bulk orders were placed with Northampton shoemakers in the 1640s[291]. The intriguing question is why. Since footwear was made almost wholly from leather it had to be in good supply. Leather needed tanning and that required tree bark, especially oak. The county was relatively well-stocked with cattle but beasts were killed for meat not for their hides which have always been a by-product of meat production. The county's forests had mostly been cut down by the end of the seventeenth century although bark as a by-product of timber production was probably in good supply. The availability of the raw materials needed for large scale shoe production was not unique to Northamptonshire and the same could be said of other counties.

Bulk orders for military footwear from Northampton during the English civil war seem to have been a trigger. These orders may have

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290 Sarjeantson, R. M. (1916). The court rolls of Higham Ferrers, *Associated Architectural Societies' Reports and Papers*. Vol. xxxiii, part ii, pp. 326-375.

291 See, Mountfield, P. (1965). The footwear industry of the east midlands, *East Midlands Geographer*, xxiii, pp. 394-413.

tested traditional production methods in which one person made the whole shoe, and encouraged labour specialisation into cutting components, stitching uppers, and then making-up the boot or shoe. Better organization of shoe and boot production was needed. The civil war brought about the first regular standing army and more orders followed requiring increased labour specialisation that spread over a wider area to meet demand. Another factor is that medieval footwear was a simple product without the many components that we are used to. As time moved on, footwear became sturdier and by the time of the civil war much more robust boots and shoes with more components were needed. This would have meant more production processes that would have further increased the need for specialisation.

With a production centre established around Northampton, a growing English population, military activity and expanding colonies all fuelled increasing demand for footwear in the eighteenth and particularly the nineteenth centuries. Northamptonshire was well placed to respond and the labour-intensive nature of the work provided income opportunities men, women and children. By 1777, about eighteen per cent of men in Hamfordshoe hundred aged 18-45 serving in the militia were listed as shoemakers, by far the largest proportion in the county. In 1792, the *Mercury* advertised,

'*To all Journeymen shoe-makers. Wanted immediately one hundred journeymen shoe-makers – Good hands may have constant employ and good wages by applying to Wm Davis at Wellingborough'*.

Firms tended to stay small although Sharman's Trafalgar works at the bottom of Sheep Street was one of the largest. There were many itinerant shoe workers often from Ireland who were not members of 'the Association' and who moved around the country to find work and this impacted on local shoemakers. Sometimes referred to as 'scabs', their willingness to take lower wages provided competition to local workers[292]. Members of the Association were called 'flints'.

Shoemakers in the villages often had a small plot of ground and at harvest time worked in the fields. In the towns, their conditions were not so good. One contemporary description said that a room might be divided by a quilt and near a window a dishevelled individual

292 *Morning Chronicle*, 23rd January 1851.

would sit doubled-up at a table with their tools. Men were often dirty with unkempt beards and ragged clothing. The man's wife would be on the other side of the screen typically stitching or binding uppers on a table amidst the remains of breakfast. Children as dishevelled as their parents typically did some sort of work to help them. The rooms they occupied were barely furnished or contained broken furniture. There was typically a small round table and two chairs and as many stools as there were children. A dish of potatoes and turnips might be served. The men were prone to drink on Sundays and lay idle on Mondays. While this is a supposedly eye-witness account, doubtless many shoemakers had a better standard of living but it may be illustrative of conditions for many people[293].

While it was for a long time a main source of employment in the town, particularly making uppers which were sent elsewhere, trade was not always good and there were times when people had no work. In 1860 for instance, trade slumped and many shoe workers had to find work in the fields. Shoemakers were also prone to take industrial action over wages, conditions and concerns over the impact of new machinery particularly when work was slack. The town may have been the first to machine close (stitch together) uppers about 1854 in the premises of Messrs Smith and Gibbs. Uppers were sent to London where the whole shoe was constructed and this, to some extent, overcame labour hostility[294]. The introduction of sewing machines inspired John Askham's poem *The Singers* so titled as Singer sewing machines were widely used in making shoe uppers. He was working in a shoe factory at the time.

Round and round, with monotonous sound,
Till rattle the windows, and shakes the ground,
Till the roof resounds, and the rafters ring
With the noisy chorus the "Singers" sing.

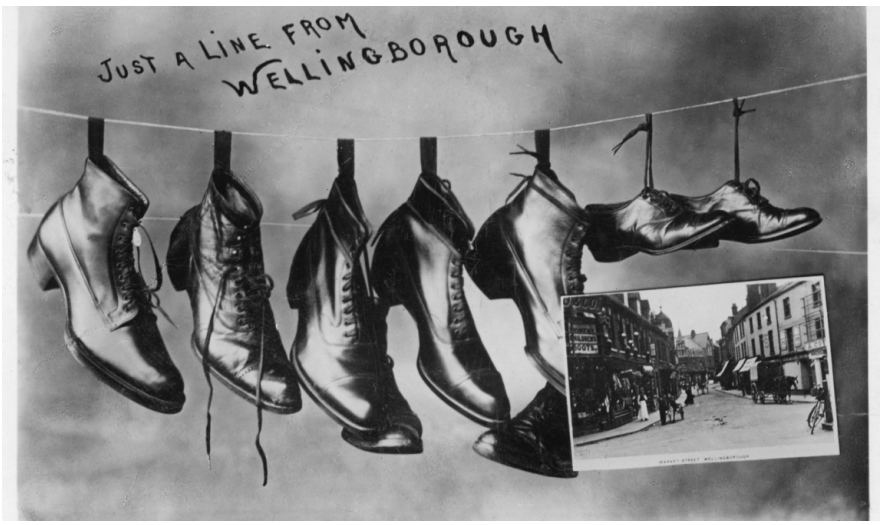
In 1856 much discontent existed among the shoemakers surrounding the introduction of machinery for stitching uppers and for making them up, it was said at the rate of several hundred pairs per day. Some strongly worded placards circulated and meetings were held

293 *Morning Chronicle*, 30th January 1851.

294 Church, R.A. (1990). Innovation 1800-1860: The boot and shoe industry. In R. Davenport-Hines (ed.) *Capital, Entrepreneurs and Profits*, pp. 89-109, Abingdon: Frank Cass.

to oppose what many workmen saw as against their interests. Once again though, progress had its way and a trade directory of 1874 lists four boot blockers, seventy-eight boot machine closers, twenty-three boot and shoe manufacturers (wholesale), ten boot and shoe manufacturers and eight boot and shoe upper manufacturers in the town.

Shoe workers were forever vulnerable to competition between factory owners who would take lower prices to win orders and hence pay lower wages. Lower wages meant that to keep some level of work craftsmen often had to employ their children thus denying them access to education[295]. This type of competitive behaviour among manufacturers aimed at driving down production costs eventually led to the demise of many British footwear firms in the second half of the twentieth century. Shoemaking was an important occupation for Wellingborough for two hundred years, but it was a hard life for many of the people who worked in it.



Postcard incorporating a view of Market Street

295 *Morning Chronicle*, 4th February 1850.

Railways

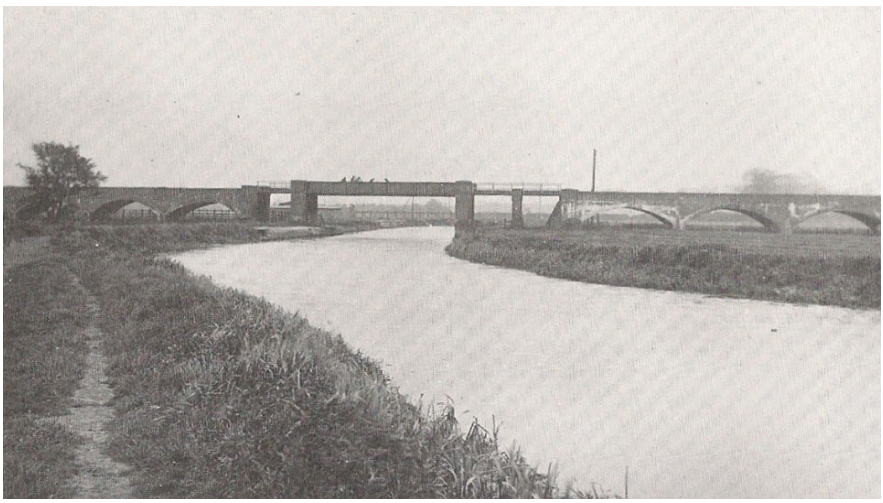
It is perhaps hard to appreciate the impact that the railways had on society. The first station at Wellingborough was just south of the river at Little Irchester on a branch line from Blisworth to Peterborough. The first train along the line in June 1845 drew crowds of spectators at every station on route 'looking with wondering eyes upon the imposing novelty'. Some people were said to lament the old coaching days but the railways had become 'a great fact'. There was simply no point opposing them any further. Excursions were open for people to see towns and villages that they had never been to. Railways were 'instructive and profitable to everybody'. Wellingborough was a 'first class' station as all trains stopped there. Ditchford was a third-class station, basically a booking office with trains stopping only if passengers wanted to get on or off[296].

To connect the station to the town a gravel path was laid using public land and land donated by the Misses Corrie. Lime trees were later planted to create The Walks and to provide a safe and pleasurable route to and from the station. Increased traffic in the area highlighted the inadequate state of the bridge and by 1889 moves were underway to replace it. London Road was improved to cater for increased traffic. This station went out of use in the 1960s and little if any trace of it remains.

296 *Northampton Mercury*, 7th June 1845, p.3

A line connecting Leicester to London was under discussion by 1845 and the town's second station was opened in May 1857 on the Leicester to Hitchin line. Initially there were four trains a day down to Hitchin. Thousands of people took the opportunity to visit Leicester when the line opened and special trains for the occasion were put on. The people of Leicester turned out to welcome them. The workhouse children of Bedford made the trip and were entertained in Leicester's Temperance Hall[297]. There must have been fears about safety since for £3 a year the Railway Passengers Assurance Company would pay out £1,000 on death and £6 a week in the event of injury in an accident.

Midland Road was built so that traffic could get to and from the station. A row of houses called Midland Cottages was built by 1871 at the bottom of Finedon Road to house railway workers. Foundations for engine sheds capable of holding twenty engines each were laid in 1867. The downside of this was concern that the influx of new workers would increase the demand for housing which was already a problem for the poorer inhabitants.



The railway line linking both stations, pre-Embankment

297 *Leicester Mercury*, 9th May 1857, p 5

Ironworks

By great coincidence the railways established in the 1840s and 1850s ran very close to workable seams of ironstone. The quality of the local ore was good and large-scale quarrying and smelting soon began. One of the first quarries opened in Irthlingborough in 1851 or 1852 although it was commonly referred to as the Wellingborough ironworks given its location at the bottom of the road to Irthlingborough where it crosses the Ise brook.

Another early innovation was a blast furnace established by William Butlin in the East End in 1853. Iron ore was quarried nearby at a site now occupied by Eastfield Park. Topsoil and overburden were dug out in strips and placed to one side. The iron ore underneath was then broken up by hand or by blasting and when exhausted the soil and overburden were put back. This explains why Eastfield Park is lower than the surrounding land. Ore was taken to the furnace by cart as there was no tramway. There was initially one furnace which by 1860 produced about eighty tons of iron a week. Three qualities of iron were produced and were measured by the number of blows it took from a twenty-two-pound sledgehammer to break a 'pig'. To source the water needed for the boilers the company sunk a well 336 feet deep[298]. A second furnace was built in 1863.

The East End works were at the bottom of Furnace Street where the Waendel Leisure Centre is. Nearby Ferrestone Road is another reminder of local ironworking. The furnace site, however, was cramped and when the Eastfield quarry was exhausted the East End furnace was decommissioned and production was transferred in 1878 to the Irthlingborough quarry site where quarrying had finished. Two new blast furnaces were built there in 1883 and the site was the first major contributor to iron production in the county. The site was purchased by United Steel in 1925 and the furnaces were demolished to make way for a foundry which became part of Morris Motors in 1947 and then British Leyland until the site closed in 1981.

Probably inspired by the East End works, John Askham described in *The Furnace* hearing on a quiet night the roar of the blast and seeing the red glow of the fires on the edge of town.

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298 *Northampton Mercury*, 22nd October 1859, p.4

Nature hath given to man the key
Of her wide exhaustless treasury
And it needs but labour's alchemy
To open and use her bounteous stores
And turn into wealth as precious ores
As are found on Australia's golden shores.

When the Irthlingborough Road quarry was first opened a tramway ran across the road, alongside the river Ise and down to the Northampton to Peterborough main line. When the Midland Railway was built a few years later a bridge was built to take the line over the tramway. The bridge was a feature of the Leyland site and separated the offices from the main works. The former Eastfield quarry became allotments that included the land later taken by Bedale Road.

Replacing horse-drawn waggons, small locomotives worked the tramways and connected to mainline railways so that mass movement of materials on a large scale was possible. More quarries opened and in 1873, 1.4 million tons of iron ore were extracted and there were four furnaces[299]. Tramways extended off the two main railway lines into the countryside to reach the growing number of quarries. With the discovery of ironstone across the county there were high expectations that coal was also present but it was never found. Wellingborough was the largest area for ironstone extraction in the county in 1869, the next largest being Nether Heyford. In one week in 1870, Butlin's ironworks shipped over 600 waggons in and out carrying materials and pig iron. In addition, 1,000 tons of ore were used locally in their furnaces to produce 450 tons of iron from 1,000 tons of coal and 250 tons of coke. By the late Victorian era, there were quarries north of Gold Street and Nest Lane, in the area that is now Eastfield Park, on both sides of Finedon Road, and on the Harrowden Road near Vicarage Farm. Extensive quarrying also took place in Finedon particularly north of Sidegate Lane and in Irthlingborough east of the Midland Railway line. In the late nineteenth century the Albion Brass and Iron Foundry was located where Matalan is south of Cambridge Street.

Clay for brickmaking and ironstone for smelting occurred near to each other on the east side of the town. James Rixon, a brick maker, established an ironworks near the clay pits at the bottom of Finedon Road, now on Rixon Road, that went into blast in 1884 and a second

299 *Northampton Mercury*, 20 March 1875, p.2.

furnace was built in 1886. The company became the Wellingborough Iron Co. in 1889 but was generally known as 'Rixon's' to distinguish it from Butlin's furnaces not far away. The Stanton Iron Co. purchased the company in 1932, the old furnaces were demolished and three new ones were installed. Notorious for creating clouds of red dust that settled on everything around Finedon Road and Eastfield Road, the furnaces eventually shut down in 1962[300].

Finedon Road furnaces moments before demolition, 1963.

300 Sanders, J. (1994). *The story of ironmaking in Northamptonshire, 200BC to 1980AD*.

Quarrying and smelting were dangerous occupations and there many serious accidents in the quarries, on the railways and at the furnaces, some horrific and fatal. A boiler explosion at Butlin's East End works, next to the Swan & Nest, killed Benjamin Clayson alias Tomkins in 1871. Henry George was killed in 1894 at the Wellingborough Iron Company's furnaces leaving a widow and small family. The pastor of the Congregational Church negotiated with the company to pay his widow ten shillings a week for two years. While employed in blasting operations in 1895, Joseph Chamberlain tried to break a lump of dynamite. His left arm was blown off and his right arm and face badly injured. Employees who neglected their duties could be prosecuted. An engine driver who was found asleep one evening was summoned because Messrs Butlin felt that falling asleep raised the risk of a boiler explosion, as had previously happened. Another man was summoned in 1869 for leaving his employment without giving notice. The company withdrew the charge but wanted to make the point that employees could not just leave when they liked.

Ironworking was a major industry in the area for around a hundred years until it finally shut down in the 1960s[301]. Better quality ore was being imported and local production was concentrating on the furnaces as Corby. Much of the industrial archaeology that was left has been destroyed but some is preserved in Irchester Country Park.

301 Starmer, G. (1970). Ironworks in Northamptonshire, *Bulletin of Industrial Archaeology in CBA Group 9*, No. 11, pp.17-34.

A Finedon Road furnace just about to hit the ground.

Brickyards

Messrs Ryley and Gibbons had brick, tile and lime kilns by 1791. They advertised superior pantile at four pounds three shillings per thousand, best stock brick at one pound two and sixpence per thousand and supplied flooring tiles. New brickyards were created to cater for building development in the nineteenth century. Mr Littler's brickyard is mentioned in 1868. In 1879 a large quantity of fossilised bones was dug out of the brickyard run by Mary Sears and her son-in-law Robert Sears in Havelock Street at a depth of thirty to forty feet.

The Sears had set about creating a brickyard and were often summoned before the Board of Health for the nuisance arising from the smoke issuing from their chimney that affected houses nearby. There was a large drying shed, and engine shed and three kilns. Three labourers were crushed by a fall of earth in 1881 and one, Samuel Spires who was married with four children, was killed. The pit was up to fifty feet deep with sheer sides and was said to be large enough to hold Broad Green. An inquest returned a verdict of manslaughter against Mr Sears of which he was acquitted. These brickworks were located between St John Street and Outlaw Lane and were disused by 1888.

In 1898 Joseph Cordon aged five who was with his father at the Wellingborough Brick and Tile Company on Northampton Road was killed by a fall of earth. Children were not supposed to accompany their parents to work but this was deemed to be an accidental death. His father had 'tramped' with the child from Ilkeston to find work. The company which closed in the early twentieth century was incorporated in 1872 and the brickworks were just below Dale Street.

Messrs Rixon & Company had brickworks at the bottom of Finedon Road near Midland Cottages consisting of drying sheds, stables, offices, an engine house and other buildings. There was a serious fire there in 1875 and the fire engine at the nearby railway station was despatched to help. The town's bricklayers in the Amalgamated Society of Bricklayers went on strike in 1899 as employers denied their requests for an advance on the standard rate of seven and a half pence per hour and changes to working rules. Employers said that they gave a half penny increase the year before and in any case many men earned above the standard rate. The building trade was booming at the time such that the local brickworks could not keep up with demand so the stoppage helped to build supplies back up. A syndicate was formed in 1899 to start-up a new brickworks on a large scale near the Midland railway station. This became the Midland Brick Company which dissolved in 1963.

CHAPTER 17

PASTIMES AND SPORT

Little is known about sport in the town before the late Victorian era but there is a story from 1570. Edward Robertes of Wollaston, a labourer, was playing bucklers with Ralph Ellyott, blacksmith of Wellingborough. Bucklers was something like fencing with a sword and a small shield called a buckler. Robertes struck Ellyott inflicting a mortal wound but was pardoned as his death was judged to be by misadventure [302].

Three hundred years later and with the swords put away the town had a thriving lawn tennis club and several cycling clubs. A golf club was formed in 1895 with a nine-hole course. Shooting matches were commonplace on the rifle range on land that is now Butts Road. The first public recreation ground was opened in 1866 after the local Board of Health rented about fifteen acres of land adjoining Castle Close. The new ground was partly levelled for games. Swimming baths were opened in 1892 more out of concern for cleanliness than exercise. They were erected in a portion of Brook Orchard at the rear of Dulley's brewery and were accessed by Castle Lane. The bath was 63 feet by 25 feet and had an iron rail around it. There were three diving boards and a viewing gallery. Water was fed from a spring through the brewery. Reassuringly, the interior was 'well supplied with lavatory accommodation'. It was also intended that 'the baths shall be reserved on certain days for ladies'. The building is now home to an excellent museum.

302 Calendar of Patent Rolls, Elizabeth I, Vol. V.

Castle Lane towards Dulley's baths later Cox's shoe factory. Note the Swanspool brook in its concrete retainer and an old ironstone wall.

Quoits, skating and fishing

Quoits seems to have been a popular pastime but was sometimes dangerous. In 1773 an inquest ruled accidental death in the case of an infant called Hannah Bayes who died of a fractured skull after being hit by a quoit. Later, there was a town club with a quoit ground in Jackson's Lane and an annual challenge cup played over eighteen yards. Quoits matches were arranged with other towns after which players retired to the Hind for a spread. In 1863 some young men were playing quoits by the bridge when a man was struck on the head by a quoit causing a large wound. Luckily someone stitched the wound but he was weak from loss of blood. Another man was struck on the head by a flying quoit at the Oxford Tavern. A fight ensued in a large crowd watching quoits at the Bee's Wing in 1875.

A skating rink in Midland Road was taken down in 1884 less than ten years after it was built and the land added to the grounds of Mrs Dulley's Linden House. It was a commercial venture that flopped. People skated in Turnell's meadow and at Long Marsh near the

Nene and skating was so popular and the council would flood the fields at the bottom of Mill Road so that people could skate there. In 1902, Mr Lack complained about this remarking that if skating is allowed on a Sunday then cricket and football might as well also be permitted in the recreation ground. The council chairman felt there was no sin in skating on Sundays and he knew that the people were very grateful for the opportunity as it was the only day of the week that they could do it. In December 1878 people took advantage of the light nights to skate till midnight. In January 1881 the paper reported that the meadows were 'thronged' with sliders and skaters and 'one cannot help being struck by the large percentage of the weaker sex who indulge in the healthful recreation of skating'. March 1886 was so cold that people were skating on the eighteenth.

The rivers and streams of Northants once had much more biodiversity than today with trout widespread before pollution took its toll. There had perhaps been a tradition of netting and snaring fish for consumption as people were prosecuted for such offences in the late 1800s. Angling clubs were formed but attracted criticism for taking over waters for the benefit of the wealthy and denying a basic right to local people. Victorian angling reports generally speak of good sport on the Nene around Wellingborough. In 1858, a tackle maker offered a prize to the Nene Angling Club for the greatest weight of roach and dace caught in 12 days commencing 12th August. Mr Mark Sharman won with 230 lbs of fish with second place catching 54 lbs. He won a fishing rod.

Fishing was advertised as a good day out for anglers from London with the waters being close to the two railway stations. In 1884 Mr Brummit took 53 lb of chub in one day and eighteen fish weighing 49 lb another day at Woodford. He also exhibited a large pike in his shop window. Good catches of pike, roach and bream were common and two pike of 20lb and 25lb taken at Wellingborough in 1891. Pollution from human waste and industrial effluent became a persistent problem, however, and in 1896 'immense quantities' of pike, bream, tench and other fish were found dead in the water.

Football

Long before there were any organized clubs and teams in the town, people played ball games on Broad Green. Without any public recreation ground this was perhaps the only open space to use without trespassing. One of the chief instigators of the Wellingborough town club was Thomas Slinn who was the first secretary in or around 1867. Shortly afterwards the club moved to play under Association rules but a problem was finding other clubs who wanted to play Association football. Some early fixtures were arranged so that home and away games were played under different rules; Association or Rugby.

In those early days all players would attack then all fall back to defend, there was no offside and goalkeepers had no protection. The earliest games were played on a pitch in Hatton Park and later in Bassett's Close. Some of the town's earliest players were Fred Coles, W. Brightwell, W. Cheney, Foster Mason, S. Sanders and Cuthbert Curtis. The Grammar School turned out a strong football side and football slowly replaced Rugby in popularity across the county. One of the masters, J.B. Challen, played for Wales and others played for the Corinthians.

As interest in club football grew another club called Wellingborough Brittania was formed after which the Wellingborough Britons were formed in 1876 but they later changed their name to Wellingborough Revellers. After this, the three best clubs in the town held a meeting at the Midland Hotel and agreed to amalgamate to form 'one good club to be known as Wellingborough Football Club'[303]. The three clubs amalgamated were Wellingborough Town, The Revellers and the Young Britons. Mr F. Tomlin was elected secretary and asked to arrange matches. The entrance fee was fixed at 2/6d and the colours were black shorts with a lion worked in white together with initials WFC. Other teams in the town the 1880s and part of the County Association were Wellingborough Albion, Star, Excelsior, Stanley Rovers, Midland Cottages, and Anchor. In the late 1880s one of the first matches in England ever to be played under electric floodlights was played in Bassett's Close.

303 *Northampton Mercury* 4th September 1886.

The Midland Hotel at the top of Midland Road with cars for hire

The fixture list included matches against Kettering, Finedon, Rushden, Kettering Hawks, Newport Pagnell, Leicester Fosse, Notts County and Higham Ferrers. The second team played Rushden Britons, Wollaston Harriers, Kettering 2nds, Irthlingborough Revellers, Irchester Rovers, Burton Latimer, Finedon 2nds, Thrapston Wanderers and Kettering Revellers[304].

304 *Northampton Mercury*, 10th November 1888.

A match between the School and Wellingborough Town appears to have strained relations as the following report from October 1890 shows,

'*Owing to the language used by spectators on the Wellingborough Town Grammar School grounds on Saturday the school who were pitted against the Town in a County Cup tie have withdrawn from that competition.'*

The club then resolved to field a 'first class professional team' and to enter the Midland League as for the past few seasons football in the town 'has been at a rather low ebb'[305]. During a replay in the Association Cup in 1898 the home side had a goal disallowed which the home crowd thought was legitimate. The crowd assumed a very threatening attitude at the end of the match and waited for the referee outside the pavilion. An escort of police and club officials took him away but the mob was so threatening he was put up at Dulley's brewery in Sheep Street. After they had dispersed he was taken to the railway station on his journey back to Nottingham[306]. The result of the replay seems to have been overlooked in the report which was more concerned with finding and punishing the ring leaders.

In 1894 Wellingborough Town FC was playing at 'Thomas Field' in Union Lane (now Irthlingborough Road). In November that year a match was postponed because the pitch was flooded so it must have been near the river. In 1899 the Wellingborough Sports Association had unsuccessfully tried to obtain a new sports ground for the town as the town ground for football, cricket and other sports was to be taken by the Grammar School. The club moved to the ground behind the Dog and Duck in 1901/02.

Wellingborough were founder members of the Leicestershire and Northants League in 1894/5 and joined the Midland League in May 1895. That September they were in the third division along with Rushden, Kettering and Doncaster Rovers amongst others. After 18 matches Wellingborough were mid table on 16 points. After 28 games they had 26 points. In the same league Matlock had lost all 28 games scoring only three goals and conceding 140. They also played in the United League in 1896/7.

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305 *Northampton Mercury*, 3rd May 1895.

306 *Sporting Mirror*, 7th November 1898

At that time there was an Association first division containing Aston Villa, Small Heath and Everton among others and a second division containing Liverpool and Leicester Fosse among others. The Midland league seemed to be a third tier but equivalent to other regional leagues. In 1897/8 Wellingborough again appeared in the Midland and the United Leagues losing at home to Luton and away to Woolwich Arsenal but beating Southampton at home 3-2. In 1898/9 results included: beating Luton 7-1, drawing 2-2 away with Sheffield Wednesday Reserves, losing away to Brighton United, beating Tottenham Hotspur 3-1 at home but losing 3-0 away to the Arsenal. At the end of the season Wellingborough had amassed 15 points from 20 games finishing in eighth place.

The balance sheet in 1897 showed that wages for the previous season were £737-16s and a loss of £233 was reported compared to £175 the previous year[307]. At a meeting to consider its debt situation Mr A. Bond, chairman, said that home matches averaged £20 per match and next year's costs would run at about £100 above income. In 1899 WFC decided to stay in the United League which was confined to clubs in Northamptonshire.

In 1899/1900 results included drawing with Northampton and Derby but beating Leicester 7-2 at home. At the Boxing Day fixture in 1900 against Rushden a crowd of 2,000 spectators attended at the Dog and Duck. Wellingborough won 2-1 and the team was Cook, Byles, Tiney, Campion, Howard, Davies, Walker, J. Busby, Hulme, Marriott. The AGM in 1900 reported that the club were champions of the United League by 18 points and with better luck would have been champions of the Midland League. They had played 46, won 30, drawn 9, lost 7, goals for 141, goals against 69 and there were appeals for bigger crowds to overcome losses. The reserves fared much worse; played 19, won 4, drawn 3, lost 12, goals for 30, against 50. One of the best players, Bert Dartnell, had gone to Manchester City. Players included Driver, Byles, Cook, Campion, Hulme, Davies, Martin, Buswell, Brightwell, and Rivers[308].

In 1901 a suggestion to form a limited company was not approved. There was a drive to find more guarantors and season ticket buyers if the club was to continue. If the drive was successful the club

307 *Northampton Mercury*, 15th May 1897; 28th July 1899; 4th August 1899.
308 *Northants Evening Telegraph* 27th December 1900; 2nd June 1900

would go into the Southern League the following year. A loss of £249 was reported on the previous season. At the AGM in 1902, Mr Herbert Dulley reported a debt of £135. The first year in the Southern League had not been as successful as wished for and a company had been formed to carry on football in the town[309]. In 1901/2 they joined the Southern League Division 1 but in 1903 the directors of WFC Ltd caused a sensation by accepting an offer from Watford to take their place. The recent AGM reported a loss on the previous season of £500 and a committee was set-up to find a new team. WFC's resignation had been sent to the League and Watford given assurances of re-election. There was great dissatisfaction among the club's shareholders who asked the Football Association to veto the arrangements[310].

Rumours about WFC's financial position led to a meeting at the Corn Exchange in 1904 to explain the situation to supporters. Directors were satisfied with the support shown at matches but they were working at a loss of ten pounds a week and they could not keep funding it. The meeting resolved that the club should continue and Mr Bellamy said £170 had to be guaranteed. With remaining gates at £40 per match they could complete the season as expenses were £31 per week. Mr W. Gillett detailed the finances and without the guaranteed sum WFC would have to close. The Chairman said that on Saturday they had a Southern League fixture with West Ham and said they would have to wire saying they could not meet it. Mr L. Brightwell proposed a shilling subscription and with fresh directors' subscriptions enough money was raised to visit West Ham. Six players were suspended that week for alleged insubordination[311]. The club resigned from the Southern League in 1905 after finishing bottom. Sometime after this the club changed its name to Wellingborough Town.

Newspaper reports of casualties in the Great War identify many men who had at some time played football for various clubs including Wellingborough Argyle, Wellingborough Fosse, Wellingborough Wesleyans, Wellingborough Congregational, All Saints, Wellingborough Thursday and Wellingborough Redwell. Wellingborough Redwell was the name adopted by the town's club from 1905 to 1919. The following casualties were identified as playing

309 *Northampton Mercury* 5th July 1901; 5th April 1901; 27th June 1902

310 *Nottingham Evening Post* 25th June 1903

311 *Northampton Mercury* 21st October 1904

for the town although several others were described as 'prominent' footballers: Pte Frederick Arthur Bailey aged 29; Lance Corporal Alfred Bertram Holyoak, aged 33; Lance Corporal Arthur Leonard Lee, Pte George Adlington Loasby, aged 23. Major Edward Mannock V.C. had played for the Wesleyan football and cricket teams.

Cricket

A club existed in 1836 when Wellingborough played Aspley and Woburn at Newport Pagnell making 49 and 23 to the home side's 92 and 50. Playing for Wellingborough were; G. White, Darby, Tunnard, Kettle, Daniel, Hill, Bass, Connolly, H. White, Sargeaunt, Murphy. In 1846 Wellingborough played Northampton in a two-day game at home but lost by 138 runs.

A newly formed Bedford team played its first match at Wellingborough in 1847. The home team made 55 with 'the veteran White' making 20. Bedford's wickets fell before 'the ripping bowling of Jackson' (6 wickets) but they made 100 with 24 byes apparently due to having no 'long stop' namely one A. Orlebar esquire who deserted his club to play for 'his native county'. On day two, Wellingborough hit 125 but Bedford knocked off 81 to win by seven wickets. The report said that the result bodes well for Bedford as Wellingborough 'having gained the victory over all their neighbouring competitors so they might be fairly styled the first club in Northamptonshire'. The players were Q. Vivian Esq., Sanderson Esq., Rev C. Partridge, White, C.Hull, Jackson, Wright, Murphy Esq., Mr Sharman, Mr Cooke, Sherwood Esq. It seems that from the designations given the first team contained several of the town's worthies.

In the return match. Jackson of Nottingham played for Wellingborough and another Nottingham player (Oscroft) had agreed to play for them but could not turn up. Jackson's 'ripping' bowling again was a threat and the 'often applauded bowling of the veteran White' was noted. The match was decided over one innings; Wellingborough 84, Northampton 76 (Jackson 6 wickets, White 3 wickets). The Oscroft mentioned would have been either Thomas or William, two brothers who played for Nottinghamshire.

The town beat Oundle 132 to 103 in 1853 and played Bugbrooke at home in 1855. Batting first they made 109 followed by Bugbrooke's 38. Sharman (7 wickets) bowled 'ticing insinuators' and there was 'terrific

fast bowling' by W. Hall (3 wickets). Bugbrooke then got 115 followed by Wellingborough who made 43 and lost by one run.

Away to Peterborough in 1856 Wellingborough made 135 and 38 but lost by five wickets. The town were roundly beaten by Northamptonshire; Wellingborough 15 (6 ducks) and 26 lost to the county side who made 205 (Carey 5 wickets). The next year they did a bit better away; Wellingborough 131 (E. Sharman 53) and 49 against the county side's 147 (Fain 6 wickets). Against Bedford in 1859, Wellingborough lost by an innings; 45 and 97 in response to Bedford's 158. At Market Harborough that year, Wellingborough made 145 in response to 193.

In 1861 it was suggested that the Wellingborough players were well known cricketers 'but whose connection with Wellingborough was rather problematical'. Presumably feeling that they were playing a team of ringers, the Market Harborough players' faces were 'as black as the clouds above'. Despite this they totalled 153 to beat Wellingborough who could reach only 144[312].

In 1854 the club met on the 'old cricket ground' but it is not clear where that was. Again in 1875 they played on the old ground. The town certainly played matches in Bassett's Close as at the start of the 1879 season the ground there was being prepared and they played there in 1881. Bassett's was the venue for an All England XI against 18 'of the gentlemen of the district'. In 1887 the club celebrated the opening of a new pavilion and Bassett's Close was opened as a public recreation ground in 1899. In 1892 a general meeting was held at the Exchange hotel to approve the winding up of the club in view of its debts. There appeared to be one club embracing tennis, football and cricket.

Grammar school cricket

Before the school moved to its present location it had no sports grounds but at London Road it had playing fields over twenty-three acres and the Grammar School soon had a strong Masters' XI and a Boys' XI. In May 1885 the Masters beat Wellingborough by an innings. Against Leicester Ivanhoe they made 306 (Challoner 168). Ivanhoe replied with 38. Four days later they totalled only 44 away to Bedford Town but in the next game batted all day to reach 256-9 (Henfrey 103).

312 See *Bells*, 3rd July 1836; 19th July 1846; 8th August 1847, 14th July 1861.

Papers often comment on the School as a centre for developing cricketing talent and speak of it in very complimentary ways. In 1891 they made 443-7 against Leicester Ivanhoe (Thomas 127, Fryer 127, Platt 107). Rushden were taken for 339-7 in the same year. In 1892 the School made 530-5 (Challen 102, Henfrey 174). In 1894 the high scores continued; 304 against Wollaston and 378 against Emmanuel College, Cambridge. The Boys' under 14 team also did well that year scoring 309 (Morris 110 n.o.) against Bedford Priory School who were then dismissed for 6 and 8. The scores suggest that Bedford had had enough. In 1895 the Masters' XI hit 344-0 (Fryer 179 n.o., Thomson 156 n.o.) and Bedford replied with 88. In 1896 P.A. Fryer made 306 in a match against an E. Scriven's XI, 239 against Bedford and 274 against Leicester Roslyn. By then he had made 1086 runs in ten innings.

The greatest match ever played

The greatest match ever played, however, surely took place at the 'old cricket ground' in August 1875. The game was between twelve men with one arm and twelve individuals 'minus the usual number of legs by one'. Prior to the match the players paraded through the town behind a brass band. Some were by their dress Chelsea pensioners and some had a beery look 'not at all suggestive of cricketing'. Over two thousand spectators turned up and 'judging by the shouts of laughter the audience seemed satisfied with the exhibition.' The game was close being won by the one-leggers by two runs. The weather was fine over two days and the evening was devoted to dancing. Refreshments were provided by W. Pendred. The one-arm team scored 84 with Neal hitting 50 not out (five wickets for Odell). The one-leggers replied with 76 with, perhaps surprisingly, no-one run out. The one-armers then hit 56 (5 wickets for Birchmore) and the one-leggers 66 (5 wickets for Neal including two leg before wicket). One arm versus one leg matches were not uncommon and were played in several towns.

CHAPTER 18

THE TOWN AT WAR

For over a thousand years England held the basic idea that able-bodied men could be called-upon to defend the realm if it came under attack and that men should keep arms proportional to their wealth. In 1539, a muster of archers and billmen who were prepared for war if it came named sixteen men at Wellingborough and five at Earls Barton. That may not have been the town's finest hour since Daventry put forward eighty-two men, Raunds twenty-four and Finedon sixteen[313]. In the late sixteenth century Wellingborough was one of the towns where gunpowder was stored. Beacons were set-up across the county with one on the church tower at Doddington.

A book dating from around 1590 contains the names of able-bodied men in towns and villages across Northamptonshire and lists seventy-two at Wellingborough. There were of course many more men in the town but these had been selected as the first line of defence if ever needed. Although no indication of their status is given, the surnames suggest that they were mainly the wealthier residents; Ball, Clendon, Fisher, Hackney, Hensman and Roane among others. In the early seventeenth century, the town provided trained men at arms. In 1619, for instance, the vicar provided a horse and a musket as did eight others and ten other men were trained-up[314].

The English Civil War

The town was drawn into the civil war between Parliament and king as a report written at the time shows[315]. Francis Gray, a clerk of the peace and wealthy resident, had been pressured to contribute to Parliament but being loyal to the king he declined. Previously in 1640 he had been accused of influencing a privy session against those 'well affected to Parliament' and of requiring his servants to

313 '*Letters and papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, Volume 14 Part 1, Jan-July 1539, HMSO 1894.

314 Wake, J. (1925). *A copy of papers relating to musters, beacons, subsidies etc 1586-1623*, Northamptonshire Record Society; Wake, J. (1935). *The Montagu Musters Book 1602-1623*, Northamptonshire Record Society.

315 Ryves, B. (1647). *Angliae ruina* (England's ruins), part vi, pp.51-57.

store bullets to use against its supporters whom he called 'round-headed rogues'[316]. Others followed his example but became worried about their safety. Fearing inevitable conflict, the loyalists agreed to summon help from the countryside and the signal was to be given by ringing the church bells backwards if ever they were attacked.

At midnight on 26th December 1642, a hundred dragoons stationed in Northampton arrived and set about Gray's house. Realising an alarm was being sounded they tied up the bell ropes and put a guard of twelve musketeers in the churchyard to stop people getting into the belfry. Mr Gray appeared at his window and told Captain Sawyer that all were in bed and asked what warrant he had. Sawyer replied that they had a warrant for him and to seize his plate and arms for Parliament. By now the commotion was known and people ran to the church to summon the county in defence. Being denied access to the church they set upon the musketeers and forced entrance to give the signal. Meanwhile, the soldiers broke into Gray's house to arrest him and took his money and plate and headed off to Wilby. Some forty or fifty men armed with swords and staves tried to rescue Gray but could not free him. Returning to Wellingborough, the locals sought to attack the rebel (Puritan) faction in the town although the total loss from this spoilage was under thirty pounds. Some of the sufferers in the town went to the parson at Wilby telling tales that the mob would descend there. Word then went to Northampton and five hundred or more soldiers were sent and on getting to Wellingborough were deployed to secure all the entrances and exits.

Captain John Sawyer entered on the west side and encountered Mr Neile of Wollaston and shot at him but missed. In return, Sawyer was shot in the head and neck with goose-shot such that he fell forward on his horse. A man tried to beat him off his horse and some women who wanted revenge on the Puritans began to beat him. Mr Oliver Gray, nephew of Francis, saved him and carried him off to an alehouse run by Sawyer's aunt but he died the next day. Sawyer's soldiers ran away except for his brother, also Francis. A bigger fight ensued and the townsfolk with little hope of reinforcements kept out a hundred soldiers at the lower end of the town. The dying captain, however, had persuaded people that if they would be safe if they did not resist but this was not honoured. Francis Sawyer without

316 *Quarter Sessions Records in the County of Northampton*, Northamptonshire Record Society, vol. 1, 1924.

provocation killed the curate of Harrowden, Master Flint, with a pole-axe and cleft his head down to his eye.

After taking the town the soldiers began to plunder and carried all they could to Northampton, sparing none who did not support them. From Mr Gray they took everything including his papers and leaving only a single sheet for his wife and five children. His wheat and corn were given to their horses and what they could not eat they trampled. They took Mr Neile prisoner and forty more including Mr Jones the vicar.

Reverend Jones was 70 and weak yet the men took him to Northampton with them. As he could not walk, for their entertainment they made him ride a bear that they had taken from a barber in the town whom they had killed. To their disappointment, according to a report, the bear did not object and carried the vicar safely[317]. Seeing the bear's easy disposition, Jones was put on a horse and a soldier sat astride the bear but, the story goes, it savaged him to death. Even though his captors could find no good reason to detain him, Reverend Jones was held in Northampton gaol for three months in the vilest conditions but survived and returned to Wellingborough. Shortly afterwards though he was taken again, supposedly for preaching against Parliament, and starved to death in Northampton gaol. The cynical words spoken at his burial were said to be,

'*Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.*
Here's the pit, and in you must'

He has been described as a man of 'unblameable life and conversation' and a good and learned preacher 'against whom they had no objection but loyalty'[318].

Francis Gray, however, later purchased the manor of Wellingborough-Hatton in 1649 and Gage's manor (a small manor which appears in the early seventeenth century) in 1655 so he must have reconciled his differences with the Parliamentary cause. He died in 1658 and his son, also Francis, inherited the manor. By chance, however, a book survives that lists the names of men and women who in 1643

317 *Arminian Magazine*, vol XVI ,1793

318 Orger, J.G. (1864) 'Wellingborough and its antiquities', *Ecclesiologist*, XXV p. 299

lent money and plate to Parliament[319]. The interest rate was eight per cent so pretty good compared to today. At Wellingborough, 136 names are listed and most people gave under a pound or one or two pounds. Mr Francis Gray, however, is listed as lending £30 and was by far the highest contributor. This does suggest that Gray, perhaps mindful of the way that events were going in the country, switched sides or at least wanted to give the appearance of doing so. Furthermore, of the twenty-four men who acted as churchwardens in the 1630s and 1640s, fourteen had lent money to Parliament. Given that the churchwardens along with the overseers of the poor were generally men of influence, this suggests at least some sympathy with Parliament among the town's elite.

After the incident in the town, three burials took place on the 30th December 1642 of men that the parish register tells us were 'slaine'; George Fisher a stranger, Jacob Flint of Harrowden a minister, and Robert Freeman of Wellingborough. These entries relate to the disturbance above when the town was ransacked. In 1645 the parish register recorded that Henry Brass 'souldier' was buried 21st June, John Osteller 'souldier' 25th June, two unnamed soldiers buried 3rd July, William Peacock a soldier buried 16th August and another unnamed soldier buried 1st September. They were probably casualties from the Battle of Naseby which took place on the 14th June that year as many of the wounded soldiers were removed to local towns and villages for such care as could be provided[320].

In May 1649 some soldiers in Cromwell's New Model Army rebelled against pay and politics. Known as the Banbury Mutiny, three of the ringleaders were imprisoned and later shot including Cornet James Thompson. His brother, Captain William Thompson, was tracked down and shot dead in a spinney near the Digger community in Wellingborough, possibly at Bareshanks towards the Sywell Road. He may have been heading for the Diggers with whom he had great sympathy. A contemporary report says that on being found, Thompson shot a cornet and wounded another, then retreated into the bush having been shot twice. When the soldiers closed in on him, he charged again with his pistol and tuck (a sword) but was shot again. Saying he would take no quarter, Major Boteler's corporal took a carbine and shot him dead[321].

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319 NRO, FH Baker 703

320 Gruber von Armi, E. (2001). *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, Ashgate.

321 A letter concerning events at Oxford, 20th May 1649. (Early English Books

For the most part the names of the soldiers who fought in the civil war are not known, but we do know of one. In 1668, John Warner of Wellingborough said in a petition that he had served in a brigade of horse under Prince Rupert and in Captain Browne's Troop in the Northamptonshire regiment of the Rt Honourable James Earle. He said that in service he was diminished by wounds and by plunder, presumably of his belongings, and was now in a deplorable condition. He felt that he was entitled to a pension of £4 a year but had not received anything[322].

Also relating to the civil war, Mr Thomas Andrews the vicar was often disturbed by Puritan soldiers while preaching and two were prevented from stabbing him in his bed. He also had trouble from the Quakers who disturbed him while he was preaching in the church. Perhaps sensing the mood of change, he lived a frugal life and saved enough to look after himself when he was eventually removed from his living in 1662 following the Act of Uniformity that required ministers to use a common prayer book. Those who refused could not continue and were replaced. After his ejection he retired to Mears Ashby where he continued preaching privately and living a quiet life[323].

Yeomanry Cavalry

The Wellingborough Troop of Yeomanry Cavalry was operational by the late eighteenth century. In 1798 the Troop paid £73 (about £9,500 in 2019) as their voluntary subscription towards the defence of the country. A list of subscribers to the Troop shows that it was made up of men from the town and from neighbouring villages. In 1799, it met near the mansion of Captain (later Major) Dickens at Wollaston where they had an excellent cold spread in tents pitched on the lawn. Many 'respectable ladies' were present and the evening concluded with dancing on the lawn. Surplus food and ale was given to the poor. The Troop met regularly for several days to be trained and to practice

Online).

322 www.civilwarpetitions.com. A John Warner was baptised at Wellingborough in 1608 and one was buried in 1689. These may not be the same person as named in the petition.

323 *The Nonconformist's memorial: being an account of the ministers, who were ejected or silenced after the Restoration, particularly by the Act of Uniformity*, 1662, p. 253.

field manoeuvres. It met at the Hind and assembled in the Market Place. In 1823 the younger members of the Troop were requested to 'make their horses steady to the sword and quiet to mount' the day before assembling. It seems that some of the less experienced riders might have had trouble with their mounts. In 1836 the Troop had a ball at the Hind with dancing starting at eight o'clock.

The Boer War

In 1904 a memorial was unveiled in the Drill Hall to the men of the district who served in the Boer War but its whereabouts now are unknown. Some of the volunteers can be traced, however. In 1900, the following men joined the 1st Volunteer Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment; H. Smith, E. Smith, V. Jolley, F. Thompson, C. Blunt, J.W. Roberts, A. Cobb, and T. Reeves. Mr J. Blott of the City Imperial Volunteers died in 1900 perhaps from disease as he was a staff clerk. Private Edward Smith and Private J. Brown of Hill Street both died of sickness. Private J. Pancoust formerly a policeman in the town was taken prisoner. Privates Holmes and Bosworth of the Wellingborough Ambulance Corps were detached to a hospital ship that brought wounded men back from the Cape. Fifty-one men from the district's St John's Ambulance Corps had volunteered for service of whom five had died[324]. At a reunion of former members of Wellingborough Albion FC in 1902, Basil Thompson was welcomed back from three years' service and said that after a long march to the Vaal River he was surprised to find the former secretary of the club Mr E. Howe. Sister Minnie Headland of Cannon Street who was a nurse at a refugee camp wrote a detailed letter home saying that conditions in the camps were not that bad, but she had little time for the behaviour of the Boers[325].

An Army Reservist Fund was established through voluntary subscriptions to help the wives and children of volunteers. There was opposition to the war, however, and a meeting of the free churches (non-conformists) in 1901 moved that Great Britain had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of another country. Various other groups also opposed the war.

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324 *Northampton Mercury*, 29th May 1903, p7.

325 *Northampton Mercury*, 6th September 1901, p.2.

The Great War

The memorial

After the Great War had ended, the first memorial was a temporary wooden structure erected in November 1919 at the bottom of Market Hill in Market Street. A thousand former servicemen marched past saluting their fallen comrades. Over two nights about 1,800 former soldiers were entertained with dinner funded by donations from the wealthier residents. Many other memorials were also placed in churches, factories and societies across the town. The memorial in All Saints church carries 141 names, the Congregational memorial 93, St Barnabas 84, St Mary's 69, the Wesleyan Chapel 33, All Hallows 27, the Catholic Church 15 and the Primitive Methodists 11. The Ancient Order of Foresters listed 55 names, the Independent Order of Oddfellows 31, the Church Lads' Brigade 22, the Victoria Congregational Chapel 21, The Independent Order of Rechabites 21, The Salvation Army six, and the Post Office three names. A stone cross on an octagonal base was placed in the churchyard. Its inscription translates as 'Peace to the unconquered'. Other forms of memorial included the building of an extra children's ward at the Cottage Hospital and the Wesleyan chapel placed a memorial cot in the National Children's Home and Orphanage.

Where to put a permanent war memorial was not an easy decision. Various places were proposed including the Market Square, Gloucester Place and Swanspool. In the end, the War Memorial Committee decided to place it at the bottom of Broad Green. This choice may have been connected to the large assembly space in front of it and its commanding position at the top of the town. There were delays in construction and the memorial was unveiled in 1924 with full military ceremony. It records 677 names with surname and initials only. The Absent Voters list of 1918 names about 2,050 serving soldiers which taken with the number already killed, soldiers ineligible to vote and men previously discharged from service easily puts the number of men who served at over 3,000. This puts the chance of being killed at about one in four to five. In addition, many women served in nursing and other support roles. Given that the population of Wellingborough in 1911 was about 20,000 including children and people too old to serve, it is clear that a large proportion of young men served in some way.

Temporary war memorial at the bottom of Market Place, 1919.

Casualties

With memorials placed in all towns and villages after the war, few soldiers are commemorated on more than one memorial suggesting considerable co-ordination among the various organizing committees. Clearly there was a rigorous process to identify the dead but, even so, twenty-five names were added after the main listing suggesting that they were identified and added after 1924. Most of the 677 names have now been identified and most were killed in action or died of wounds[326]. A few died in accidents or of illness. Of the 638 casualties positively identified, 581 were British Army, twenty were Royal Navy, seven were Royal Flying Corps or Royal Air Force, twenty were with Canadian forces, eight were with Australian forces and two (Elizabeth Adams and Olive Rowlett) were nurses. Many of those who had served with Commonwealth forces were born in Wellingborough.

Most were killed in France or Flanders but thirty-seven died in the Middle East and twenty-three were lost at sea. On average, three men were killed in each week of the war but at times of major

326 Swailes, S. (2021). *Wellingborough War Memorial: The Great War Roll of Honour*.

engagements the figure was much higher. At least twenty men from the town who served in the Northamptonshire Regiment were killed on the 9th May 1915 at the Battle of Aubers Ridge. For Private Percy Capon of Elsden Road it was his first day at the front. The average age of those who died in the war was twenty-six. Records suggest that four or five were aged only seventeen and that twenty-two were aged eighteen. About thirty per cent were aged nineteen to twenty-one, about thirty-nine per cent were aged twenty-two to twenty-nine. The oldest person was Nursing Sister Elizabeth Adams who was fifty-four. She was in charge of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) hospital at Wellingborough located in the gasworks on Senwick Road/Irthlingborough Road and died of influenza. Thousands lined the route of her funeral procession in November 1918.

About two-thirds of those who died were born in or near Wellingborough. Many came from the new estates on Mill Road, Newcomen Road, Winstanley Road and Knox Road although few streets in the town were spared. There are about fifty instances of two brothers commemorated and at least six cases of three brothers who were killed. George and Jane Aldridge of 122 Newcomen Road lost their sons Thomas, Cyril and Leonard all in 1917. Their son John also served but appears to have survived.

About forty per cent of the men commemorated on the memorial have no known grave. If soldiers were wounded they had a chance of being removed to field hospitals and if they later died then the grave location is likely to be known. However, some battlefield graves were subsequently hit by shelling such that grave markers were lost. Bodies buried by enemy forces would most likely be in unmarked locations. Many who fell on the battlefield were simply never found or if found were beyond recognition.

Letters home

The circumstances in which soldiers fought will be familiar but a few examples bring it home[327]. Arthur Allen had been killed in 1916 and his brother Sgt Alfred John Allen of the Gloucesters was killed by a shell burst in 1917. An officer wrote to his parents,

"He was coming out of the trenches in charge of his platoon when a shell

327 Most casualties were reported in the *Wellingborough News* and the *Kettering Leader* of the time.

burst against them, killing Sergt Allen and two other men instantly. We all felt it so much sadder as they were half way back to their billets and everything was quiet, only two shells falling anywhere near the company. As his company officer I beg to express the sincere sympathy of the whole company, and great regret at losing such as gallant comrade and fearless and good non-commissioned officer. He was easily our most popular Sergeant and whether on parade or at games a great favourite with us all."

Arthur John Ashpole was posted to the front in December 1914 and his parents received a letter from a friend,

"We went into the trenches on Friday night (January 15th) and on the next day poor old Jack, my mate, was hit in the head and died almost instantly. I was not with him at the time. I feel it very much, we were pals so long. I feel very lonely now we are out of the trenches. I didn't know anything about it for three or four hours afterwards. We used to go halves on everything we had".

Private John Baxter was killed in 1915 and an officer wrote to his parents in Alma Street,

"I am very sorry to have to tell you that 17832 Pte J.E. Baxter, of my company, was killed this morning by a shell at 1.30. He was killed almost outright for I was with him in a minute and he was certainly unconscious with his head shattered then. He died on the way to the dressing station and will be buried to-night in a soldiers' cemetery here. The papers etc will be returned to you with his cigarette case. Another man was killed and one wounded by the same shell as they were working on a trench. I shall miss him very much, as he was a splendid fellow, and seemed very cheerful. I am the only original B Company officer left now and have charge of the company with some new subalterns. I write to you to offer my deepest sympathy. This war is taking many of our best men but their lives are not thrown away."

Sgt Amos Brooks was killed in 1917 and his commanding officer wrote to his parents in Midland Road,

"He behaved in the most gallant manner, which may be some consolation to you. He went out of the trench with two other men to bring in a wounded man lying out in the open and on reaching the first man saw another one a short distance away, and crept towards him, but unfortunately was shot dead whist going on. His example encouraged the other men to go out to

the second man who was bandaged up but was too bad to move. Your son died showing great devotion to duty and personal disregard of danger, and we shall all feel the loss of a brave man. G.B. Trent, Lt-Colonel, Northants Regt"

Not all the casualties died as a result of combat, however. Within a fortnight of demobilisation Ernest Gent died of influenza at the VAD hospital in 1919 aged 37. He had served for 17 years in the Territorials before the war and joined the Northamptonshire Regiment and later the Royal Fusiliers going to France in 1915. Pte Fred Glover of the Machine Gun Corps fell asleep in an unventilated dugout but was overcome by fumes from the brazier and never woke up. Senior Nursing Sister Olive Rowlett was stationed on the hospital ship *Drina* moored in Cromarty harbour. Together with others she went to a party on a nearby battle cruiser but its magazine exploded killing over 400 people.

Some casualties were very difficult to trace. Bertie Chatfield for instance, whose parents lived in Mill Road, joined the Navy in 1907 but jumped ship in Australia. He enlisted in the Australian Infantry Force in 1916 as John Williams and his service records show that he was last seen lying by the German wire at Bullencourt having lost a leg. Another soldier bandaged his legs and stayed with him before being forced to retire but Williams was never seen again. He was possibly taken prisoner or died on the battlefield. His brother Arthur was killed in 1915 and three other brothers also served.

Errors and omissions

The memorial contains a few mistakes and there are a few individuals whose names might be added. The names were re-cut about 2000 and during that process some may have been cut incorrectly although they might have been incorrect in the first place. Clear errors are that 'Cos' should be Cox, 'Clays' should be Clayson, 'Fardent' should be Farden and 'Jenking' should be Jenkins. Some other names have minor spelling variations from what they should be. The initial letters C and G are sometimes interchanged as are E and F.

Of the names that have not yet been identified about twenty are very close matches to names that are listed. 'F. Ealey' appears twice but only one casualty can be identified. 'L.H. Stebbings' appears twice but only one casualty with this name has been found. 'W. Eales' cannot be found but may be the same as 'W.J. Eales' who is

identified. It seems likely that some of the names are duplicates in some cases with an initial letter missing. This may reflect a cautious approach by the War Memorial Committee; if in doubt then better to risk duplicating a name rather than risk excluding someone.

However, there may also be some omissions in the listing. 'W. Bailey' is listed but this could be Walter or William. 'H. Jones' is commemorated but could be Horace or Harold who occur on church memorials. 'A. Jones' occurs once but the *Wellingborough News* reported that Arthur, Albert and Alfred Jones were killed in the war. Another cause of omissions is that some soldiers died after the war and there had to be a cut-off date after which casualties could not be included. One case is of Private Frank Hilton of Knox Road who lay on the battlefield for seven days with gunshot wounds before being picked up. He died in 1924 after twenty-one operations for his wounds[328]. Other possible omissions are Sidney Cobb, Fred Massey and Frederick Alderman amongst others.

328 *Wellingborough News*, 8th February 1924.

The grave of Pte Stephen Horsley in Jerusalem, among comrades.

When the peace treaty was signed in the summer of 1919 there were celebrations across the country. A procession set off through the town for a service in Bassett's Close and over a hundred former prisoners of war were supported by public collections. The British Legion did what it could to help the families of those who had been

killed. Like all other war memorials, the memorial at Broad Green helps to offset the feelings that inevitably arise from the loss of life and of loved ones. It helps to explain what happened and to give a sense of meaning and significance to the suffering that both the fallen and those left at home had to endure. The memorial reminds us not just of those who died but also of their wives and children and their parents who carried their losses for the rest of their lives.

The war memorial on Broad Green, unveiled in 1924 with full military ceremony.

POSTSCRIPT

So here we are at the end of a journey and perhaps now we can appreciate the place that we started from a little better. Long periods of stability in Wellingborough's past were punctuated by events that changed things socially, economically and politically; the Conquest, pestilence, the Civil War, fire, religious tolerance, mechanisation, industrialisation and two world wars. Population growth was slow and steady until the eighteenth century after which the town expanded fast.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that architecturally and spatially the old town centre has been ravaged and despoiled in the past sixty years or so. Never in a thousand years has it been so unappealing. That said, some grand old buildings remain even if their modern surroundings leave much to be desired. But take a walk around and you can catch a glimpse of what it once was like. All Hallows church in all its magnificence may well mark the site of the original Saxon settlement. Some once desirable family houses can be made out above garish shop fronts. Fragments of ironstone and limestone walls that once bounded the old roads and lanes are there to see. There are old schools, inns, shoe factories and workshops lying amongst the signage, the parked cars and the wheelie bins. The museum and the council's heritage trails do a good job at connecting the past and present. Take the time to have a look.

Appendix 1. Population growth

Source	Date	Population Indicator	Population estimate
Domesday Book	1086	48 households	200-250
Survey of Crowland manor	1320	140 rent paying tenants although not all tenants were named.	At least 630 plus people on other manors
Lay subsidy	1334	A rough estimate can be made from the amount of tax paid.	600
Lay subsidy	1381	143 taxpayers including some married couples	Several hundred
Lay subsidy	1524/5	188 taxpayers	1,067
Diggers' pamphlet	1650	1,169 receiving alms	2,500
Hearth tax	1670	510 houses	2,167
Hearth tax	1674	508 houses	2,159
Compton census	1676	2,715 persons possibly excluding under 16s	2,715
John Bridges	1712	'Above 700 families'	At least 3,150
Militia list	1777	456 men aged 18-45	
Mr Pew (surgeon)	1790		2,857
Census	1801		3,325
Census	1811		3,911
Census	1821		4,454
Census	1831		4,688

Census	1841		5,060
Census	1851		5,355
Census	1861		6,382
Census	1871		9,385
Census	1881		13,794
Census	1891		14,894
Census	1901		18,419

Appendix 2. Some notable Wellingburians

Who might be considered the town's more notable inhabitants that did something above average, who made a difference to the town or to the lives of others? Some names suggest themselves. Waendel, of course, an Anglo-Saxon after whom the town is named. Doubtless many could be named, but some connected to the town are listed below.

Gilbert de Wendlyngburgh (born around 1315) who served Edward III.

Sir Christopher Hatton (1540-1591), born Holdenby. He has an incidental link since he was fortuitously given the manor by Queen Elizabeth I. His presence survives in various street names, Hatton House and the Sir Christopher Hatton Academy.

Sir Paul Pindar (ca.1566 – 1650) who rose from humble origins to become an influential diplomat and supporter of the king.

Augustine Vincent (ca. 1584-1626), of Wellingborough and Finedon, notable herald and antiquary.

William Batley (1594 – 1674), Baptised Wellingborough in 1594 the son of William, he was a notable architect and responsible for the Hind Hotel. His epitaph at All Hallows reads, 'All worldly fabrics are but vanity. To heavenly building for eternity'.

Thomas Olive (1637-1692), born Buckinghamshire but later moved to Wellingborough, a Quaker who stood for his religious beliefs and freedom. He took one of the early ships to America and founded the town of Willingboro.

John Freeman (1668-1711) who gave his time to the good governance of the town until his death and whose bequest founded Freeman's School.

Hannah Spark (1678-1785) born Hannah Stevens at Rothwell she married Havey Spark and was celebrated for using her stocks of beer to fight the fire of 1738 and for living to the age of 107.

Samuel Knight (died 1728), a cutler who left money for the founding of a school.

Thomas Cowper (pronounced Cooper, 1705-1778), born Wellingborough, a mathematician and astronomer who accepted the unenviable task of sorting out the enclosure of Wellingborough fields. He was given a Quaker burial in Castle Close.

John Clarke (1760-1815), born Wellingborough, pioneering surgeon specialising in the treatment of women and children.

John Cole (1792-1848), born Weston Favell, a prolific writer on the history of Northamptonshire including the first history of Wellingborough published in 1837. He moved to Wellingborough in 1834. Buried at Woodford.

John Askam (1825-1894), born and lived in Wellingborough, a shoemaker and poet of national importance.

Arthur George Henfry (1867–1929) Born Finedon and attended Wellingborough Grammar School. Played cricked and football for Cambridge University. Played 68 games for Corinthian Casuals and represented England five times. Also captained Northamptonshire Cricket Club before it achieved first class status and he later became a County Councillor.

William Frederick Brawn (1878-1932) born Wellingborough, footballer for Wellingborough Town, Northampton, Sheffield Utd and England.

Tom Goodey (1885-1953), born Wellingborough. Notable parasitologist but also a singer.

Major Edward (Mick) Mannock, DSO, MC, VC, (1887-1918) World War 1 fighter ace who lived in Mill Road for a few years before the war.

Nursing Sister Elizabeth Adams. Born in Ireland she cared for wounded soldiers from the Great War at the Voluntary Aid Detachment hospital where she died of influenza in 1918.

The Reverend Lt Colonel Bernard Vann VC. (1887 – 1918). Born Rushden, Chaplain and Master at Wellingborough School before the Great War. There were many priests in the armed forces but Bernard Vann was unusual in being a soldier-priest.

William Henry Perkins, (1876 – c1940), born Wellingborough, a goalkeeper who played 117 times for Liverpool before moving to Northampton Town in 1903.

Charles E.K. Mees (1882-1960), born Wellingborough, distinguished chemist.

Frederick (Fanny) Walden (1883-1949). Professional footballer who played for Northampton Town and Tottenham Hotspur. He won two caps for England against Scotland and Wales and is the shortest ever England player at 5′ 2″. He also played cricket for Northamptonshire after which he became a first-class umpire and stood in eleven test matches.

Harry Perrin (1865 – 1953), born Wellingborough, distinguished academic, organist and composer.

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